

BAHRU ZEWDE

Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia

THE REFORMIST INTELLECTUALS
OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY



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Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia

*The Reformist Intellectuals of the
Early Twentieth Century*

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Abbreviations



AA	Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Office)
AAU	Addis Ababa University
ASMAI	Archivio storico dello Ministero dell’Africa Italiana (Italian Colonial Archives, Rome)
BS	<i>Berhanena Sälam</i> (Amharic weekly of the 1920s and 1930s)
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies</i> (London)
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EJE	<i>Ethiopian Journal of Education</i>
ELL	(Department of) Ethiopian Languages & Literature
FO	Foreign Office (British)
HSIU	Haile Sellassie I University
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies (Addis Ababa University)
IFP	Ilg Family Papers
IJAHS	<i>International Journal of African Historical Studies</i> (Boston)
JES	<i>Journal of Ethiopian Studies</i>
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (French Foreign Ministry)
MPA	(Former Ethiopian) Ministry of Pen Archives
NL	National Library (Addis Ababa)
NS	Nouvelle Série (New Series of MAE Archives)
NTEN	<i>New Times and Ethiopia News</i>
Sec. of St.	(US) Secretary of State

Note on the Ethiopian Calendar

The Ethiopian calendar differs significantly from the Gregorian. The years are seven to eight years later (depending on whether it is before or after the beginning of the Gregorian year in January) and anywhere between six to eleven days later (depending on which month of the year). This explains the apparent anomaly why someone could be said to have been born in 1923/24 because the only date we happen to have is the year 1916 in the Ethiopian Calendar (EC). In this book, dates in the Ethiopian calendar are almost invariably accompanied (after a stroke) by their equivalent in the Gregorian.

Transliteration



Vowels

The seven orders of the Ethiopic alphabet are represented as follows:

1st order	ä (as in 'ever')
2nd order	u (as in 'rude')
3rd order	i (as in 'machine')
4th order	a (as in 'rather')
5th order	é (as in 'send')
6th order	e (somewhat shorter than the 'i' in 'sit' and often silent, in which case the 'e' would be omitted)
7th order	o (as in 'note')

Consonants

The explosives in Ethiopic, so often such a challenge to non-native speakers, are rendered as follows:

<u>ch</u>	for the explosive variant of 'ch'
p	for the explosive variant of 'p'
q	for the explosive variant of 'k'
<u>t</u>	for the explosive variant of 't'
ts	for the explosive variant of 's'

ñ is pronounced as in the Spanish 'señor'

Gemination is indicated by doubling consonants

Glossary



Most of these terms are Ethiopian titles. Here they are given in their common noun form. When they are joined to proper nouns (which is so often the case), they are capitalized.

<i>abba</i>	‘father’, also form of title for ordinary priests
<i>abéto</i>	a medieval title which came to be increasingly appropriated by Shāwan rulers after the sixteenth century
<i>abujedid</i>	imported cotton sheeting (often of American or Japanese make) used for making clothes and tents
<i>abun</i>	‘bishop’; <i>Abunä</i> when used with a proper noun, as in <i>Abunä Mattéwos</i>
<i>afä negus</i>	‘mouth of the king’, the supreme judge under the king
<i>afä qésar</i>	‘mouth of Caesar’, a Fascist adaptation of the traditional judiciary title, <i>afä negus</i>
<i>afärsata</i>	a traditional system for the detection and recovery of lost property
<i>aläqa</i>	head of a church, a learned priest, title often bestowed on scholars versed in traditional education
<i>ato</i>	a title equivalent to ‘Mr’
<i>awraja</i>	an administrative unit below the province
<i>azazh</i>	‘commander’, chief of the imperial court
<i>bäjerond</i>	royal treasurer
<i>berr</i>	the standard Ethiopian currency unit
<i>bitwäddäd</i>	most favoured courtier, imperial counsellor
<i>blatta</i>	a title generally signifying learning, given in the twentieth century to government officials at the director-general level
<i>blattén géta</i>	‘master of the <i>blatta</i> ’, an exalted version of <i>blatta</i> , given to government officials at the ministerial level
<i>chat</i> (also known as <i>qat</i>)	a stimulating plant generally chewed in a communal setting
<i>däbtära</i>	a learned cleric, often with attributes of astrology and intrigue
<i>däjjazmach</i> (shortened to <i>däjjach</i>)	‘commander of the gate’, a politico-military title below <i>ras</i>
<i>däjj tenat</i>	regular attendance in court to get favour or position
<i>echägé</i>	the highest Ethiopian ecclesiastic until the appointment of bishops (<i>abun</i>) in 1929; abbot of the monastery of Däbrä Libanos in northern Shāwa
<i>emahoy</i>	title given to a nun
<i>endärasé</i>	‘in my place’, viceroy or representative of a higher authority
<i>enjära</i>	leavened thin pancake-like bread, the staple diet in much of

Glossary

	highland Ethiopia
<i>etégé</i>	title reserved for queens and queen-mothers
<i>fitawrari</i>	‘commander of the vanguard’, a title below <i>däjjazmach</i> , but of higher import when borne by persons like Habtä-Giyorgis Dinägdé, minister of war 1907–26
<i>gäbüz</i>	the secular overlord of a church
<i>gäbbar</i>	tribute-paying peasant
<i>gasha</i>	a unit of land measurement, equivalent to 40 hectares
<i>gebbi</i>	courtyard, generally applied for royal and princely compounds
<i>grazmach</i>	‘commander of the left’, a politico-military title below <i>qāññazmach</i>
<i>gult</i>	non-hereditary right to collect tribute enjoyed by members of the nobility and clergy
<i>hakim</i>	‘physician’, used as equivalent to the title ‘Dr’
<i>käntiba</i>	mayor, originally restricted to the town of Gondär in northern Ethiopia but with broader application in more recent times
<i>kosso</i>	a tree whose flowers have medicinal value as a taeniocide
<i>leba shay</i>	a system of detecting thieves through the medium of a drugged boy who sniffs around for the culprit
<i>lej</i>	‘child’, honorific title generally reserved for sons of the royal family and the upper nobility
<i>liqä mäkwäs</i>	official serving as the king’s double to divert attacks directed against him
<i>madbét</i>	‘kitchen’, land whose produce is earmarked for the immediate consumption needs of the palace
<i>mälkäñña</i>	local official charged with collecting tribute from the <i>gäbbar</i>
<i>mäkwanent</i>	nobility of service, as opposed to nobility by birth
<i>mämher</i>	‘teacher’, title of a priest
<i>märi gēta</i>	junior ecclesiastical title
<i>näggadras</i>	‘head of merchants’, originally leader of a merchant caravan, later chief customs officer
<i>neburä</i>	governor, combining ecclesiastical authority and political power, of the ancient city of Akseum
<i>negus</i>	king
<i>qāññazmach</i>	‘commander of the right wing’, a politico-military title below <i>fitawrari</i>
<i>qés</i>	priest
<i>ras</i>	‘head’, the highest traditional politico-military title under <i>negus</i>
<i>ras bitwäddäd</i>	a title combining the power of the <i>ras</i> and the imperial favour of the <i>bitwäddäd</i>
<i>shaqa</i>	an obsolete title which appears to be an ellipsis of <i>shaläqa</i> , roughly equivalent to major
<i>tsähafē te’ezaz</i>	head of the royal scribes, keeper of the royal seal; title of the Minister of Pen after 1907
<i>tsärä Maryam</i>	‘anti-Mary’, an epithet employed by hard-line Orthodox Christians to designate Protestants
<i>wäqét</i>	a unit for the measurement of the weight of gold
<i>wäl</i>	sauce commonly consumed with <i>enjära</i>
<i>wäyzäro</i>	a title equivalent to ‘Mrs’

Preface & Acknowledgements



This book has had a fairly long gestation period. My interest in the intellectuals discussed in this work can be traced back to my undergraduate years (the late 1960s) when I was assigned the task of preparing an index of the Amharic weekly of the 1920s and 1930s, *Berhanena Sälam*, by my former teacher, the late Richard Caulk. After a long hiatus, which saw many ups and downs in my life, my interest was rekindled in the 1980s as I taught the Ethiopian history course covering the early twentieth century. It occurred to me then that a comprehensive study of these intellectuals would serve two purposes.

First, it would synthesize the many separate studies that have been made on them. The intellectuals had aroused particular interest among scholars and students of Ethiopian languages and literature. As an illustration, one can cite the number of useful BA theses that had been written on some of the principal characters of this story. Not only was there a need to bring these studies together, it was also essential to try to understand the intellectuals from a historical perspective. This study is intended to meet that need.

Secondly, in our own era, the Ethiopian educated elite have played a preponderant role in the political history of the country, a role clearly incommensurate with their number. It is thus difficult to understand the genesis and course of the 1974 revolution without a proper appraisal of the Ethiopian student movement, which could be said to have started to follow a revolutionary course in the mid-1960s. In a number of ways, notably in the articulation and resolution of what has been characterized as 'the national question', the legacy of that movement is still with us. And yet the intellectual protagonists of the second half of the twentieth century had their predecessors in the first half. The revolutionary option was preceded by the reformist one.

Adding to the attraction of the subject is the rich documentation that these early intellectuals themselves have left behind. They formed a highly prolific set, ready to articulate their views on national issues with wit and eloquence. For 11 years, from 1925 to 1936, they kept alive a vibrant intellectual discourse on a variety of social and economic problems of the country through the columns of *Berhanena Sälam*. Moreover, a number of them wrote books of differing size and impact, one of them having over 20 books and booklets to his credit. At least two of them have left behind detailed memoirs of their lives and times.

Research to gather the data for the book was undertaken largely in the final years of the 1980s. Writing could not commence until 1992, when I had a fruitful sabbatical year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and at Oxford University. The two main chapters of the book,

Preface & Acknowledgements

the third and the fourth, were written in those two places, respectively. Administrative duties forced me to shelve the task for quite some time after that promising start. In the summer of 1997, I had yet another productive spell when I was offered a conducive working atmosphere at the University of Hamburg thanks to a grant from the German Academic Exchange Programme (DAAD). Thereafter, my determination to finish off the project acquired a new momentum and here I finally present my story.

Work of this nature fairly often owes a lot to help and encouragement coming from various quarters. I have had the good fortune to get such assistance from various individuals and institutions in the fairly long history of this undertaking. My colleague Merid Wolde Aregay deserves credit for urging me at the outset to apply myself in earnest to this enterprise. I have also benefited from the customary sympathy and understanding of my other colleagues in the Department of History of Addis Ababa University. The incomparably rich resources of the IES Library and the cheerful cooperation of its staff have helped tremendously to bring this project to fruition. I am indebted to the following organizations for sponsoring my visits abroad, either to complete my research or to get the free time to write up: the Japan Foundation for an inspiring visit to Japan in early 1991; the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United States Information Agency for jointly sponsoring my visit to the African Studies Center of Boston University in the summer of the same year; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for a visiting professorship in spring 1992; St Antony's College and St Cross College in Oxford for a visiting fellowship in the autumn of the same year; and DAAD for a visiting professorship in Hamburg in the summer of 1997. These visits were facilitated by Katsuyoshi Fukui in Japan, Donald Crummey and James McCann in the United States, Terry Ranger and Wendy James in Oxford, and Siegbert Uhlig in Hamburg. To all of them I express my deep-felt gratitude.

During my stay in the United States, I had a chance to visit and gather valuable material at Muskingum College, *alma mater* of Mälaku Bäyyan and Bāshahwerad Habtä-Wäld, thanks to the hospitality of the College Alumni Office. Mulu and Seifu Ali were generous hosts to me during my research at the National Archives in Washington, DC. I am also grateful to Mrs J.G. Clark, Archivist of Loughborough University in England, for selecting and sending me material on Benyam and Yoséf Wārqenäh, and the staff of Brasenose College, Oxford, for giving me access to the files of Sirak Heruy.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to all the informants, who readily shared with me their experience and knowledge. In the course of conducting interviews on *Hakim* Wārqenäh, Eleni Mekuria, his granddaughter, was my cheerful and tireless companion. *Wäyzäro* Elizabeth Wārqenäh made available to me a copy of her father's diary and *Wäyzäro* Wäynesshät Bāshahweräd gave me access to documents pertaining to her father.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the quiet but meaningful support of my family – Messenbet, Kaleb and Tsion – who bore with fortitude my frequent absences. Briefly, in the summer of 1992, the first two accompanied me during the unforgettable visits to Muskingum and Harlem (the Schomburg center) as I strove to retrace the trail of the American-educated Ethiopians.

Bahru Zewde • Addis Ababa

One



Modernization & the Role of Intellectuals

The concept of modernization

There are probably few concepts as ambiguous and elusive as that of modernization. As one study of the concept has aptly put it: 'The popularity of the notion of modernization must be sought not in its clarity and precision as a vehicle of scholarly communication, but rather in its ability to evoke vague and generalized images which serve to summarize all the various transformations of social life attendant upon the rise of industrialization and the nation-state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'¹

What exactly modern is has shifted with individual perceptions and preconceptions. Yet the concept, by reason of its practical utility, has permeated writings about the recent history of what is variously called 'the developing world', 'the third world' or 'the South'. Nor has the concept been confined to this category of countries. The modernization of countries like Japan and China, which do not quite fit into the category, has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Indeed, all countries have their modern period of history, that of western Europe at one end of the spectrum going back to the sixteenth century while in some countries of Africa and Asia the onset of the period is deferred until the twentieth.

A fundamental problem of the concept has been its ethnocentric bias, that is its close association with the Western experience. A result of this association has been that modernization has all too often been synonymous with Westernization. Thus, some of the major experiences of the West, such as industrialization and the growth of democratic institutions, have come

¹ Dean C. Tipps, 'Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective', in Cyril E. Black, ed., *Comparative Modernization. A Reader* (1976): 62. For a penetrating analysis of the tyranny of Westernization, see Serge Latouche, *The Westernization of the World. The Significance, Scope and Limits of the Drive towards Global Uniformity*, trans. Rosemary Morris (1996).

to serve, consciously or unconsciously, as the yardsticks for the modernization of a society. Such an identification of the concept with the Western experience is not difficult to understand, given the fact that it has been Western social scientists, and particularly American social scientists,² who have popularized it. This is not to say, however, that attempts have not been made to come up with more universal definitions of the concept. A notable effort in this regard is the conference on modern Japan held in the United States in the early 1960s which, among other things, grappled with the issue precisely of such a broad definition of the concept. The group of Japanese and American scholars came to the following global – as distinct from exclusively Western – attributes of modernization:

- a relatively large urban population and an increasingly urban orientation of society;
- greater use of inanimate energy;
- extensive interaction among members of society;
- widespread literacy attended by secularism and scientific orientation;
- an 'extensive and penetrative network of mass communication';
- bureaucratization of social and political institutions; and
- emergence of the nation-state and the growth of international relations.³

Yet a closer look suggests that these indices of modernization appear to pertain more to the stage of its consummation than to its beginning or to its intermediate stage. For a more graduated appraisal of modernization, we have to turn to Cyril Black, whose *Reader* in comparative modernization (cited above) was preceded by an ambitious effort to survey the process of modernization on a global scale.⁴ He identified seven patterns of modernization corresponding in large measure to the time of the initiation of the process. Historical precedence is given in this tabulated appraisal to the United Kingdom and France, followed by the United States and the British dominions. The other European countries belong to the third pattern, the Latin American ones to the fourth, and Ethiopia with a small group of Asian countries (Russia, Japan, China, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Thailand) falls into the fifth. Finally, the sixth and seventh patterns are reserved on the whole for Asian and African countries, respectively, which had extended periods of colonial rule.⁵ Elaborating on the fifth pattern to which Ethiopia belongs and which was said to have been characterized by a strategy of 'limited or defensive modernization', Black says: 'What these societies have in common is the fact that their traditional governments were sufficiently effective, because of long experience with centralized bureaucratic government, to enable them to resist direct and comprehensive foreign rule for a prolonged period in modern times.'⁶

² *Ibid.*: 71.

³ John Whitney Hall, 'Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan', in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization* (1965): 19.

⁴ Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization. A Study in Comparative History* (1966).

⁵ *Ibid.*: 90–4.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 119, 120.

While broadly indicative of the general pattern of modernization, Black's classification is not without its problems. He himself seems to be aware of this when he adds the qualification that 'No two societies modernize in quite the same way.'⁷ Although Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Thailand do seem to have a lot in common, it would appear to stretch things a bit too far to put them in the same category as Russia or, for that matter, Japan and China. Secondly, the year 1924 which has been singled out as the decisive moment for the consolidation of modernizing leadership does not appear very convincing for Ethiopia. *Ras* Tafari's tour of Europe, which apparently prompted the selection of that year, may have opened the eyes of the prince and his entourage to Western achievements. But it did not as such constitute a decisive moment in the domestic balance of power. More important in that respect would be the coronation of Haylä-Sellasé in 1930 or the promulgation of the first constitution in 1931.

A similar attempt to place the modernization process in Africa in a global context, albeit with reference to the West, was made by Philip Curtin in his book *Africa and the West*. He classifies the various experiences in this respect into two broad categories: modernizers and traditionalists. The first group is further subdivided into three shades of outright Westernizers, what are described as 'utopian modernizers' (including Marxist revolutionaries) and neo-traditionalists who aspire for a compromise between Western values and tradition. The traditionalists are likewise said to have three manifestations: the ordinary conservatives, the utopian reactionaries (with millennial and fundamentalist overtones) and the defensive modernizers who could easily shift into the neo-traditionalist pattern in the modernizers' camp.⁸

There are two problems with this classification. The first, already referred to, is its heavy dependence on Western paradigms. The second, which Curtin himself seems to be aware of, is the blurred distinction between what he has characterized as the neo-traditionalists and the defensive modernizers. Indeed, as he illustrates,⁹ it is possible for countries to start with a programme of defensive modernization and shift to unabashed Westernization, as was the case in China, Japan and Turkey; or, as happened in so many colonial situations, blind imitation of the West was often followed by critical reappraisal and a return to traditional values.

East meets West

Of all the experiences of modernization in the last two centuries, few have been as fascinating as that of Japan. The pre-eminent position that American academia held in the study of modernization in the period after the second world war was itself a reflection of their country's political and

⁷ *Ibid.*: 95.

⁸ Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa and the West. Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (1972): 234–7.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 238–41.

military interest in Japan. Moreover, what has come to be known as the Japanese miracle, the industrial transformation of Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century, has itself provided a model for other Asian and African countries in their quest for rapid modernization. Thus, comparison of Japanese modernization with processes elsewhere in Asia, Africa and the Arab world have not been lacking.¹⁰ The Japanese themselves have taken this matter so seriously that they have set up a famous and well-endowed institution known as the Institute of Developing Economies.¹¹ One of the themes discussed at a conference co-sponsored by the United Nations University in Tokyo in 1982 was also the question of what lessons might be drawn from the Japanese experience of modernization.¹²

The Japanese experience has been compared and contrasted, as the case may be, with that of China, Thailand and the Arab world.¹³ In the African continent, too, the Meiji restoration did not pass without a ripple. We shall examine below in more detail the impact that it had on Ethiopian intellectuals of the early twentieth century. Another African country where emulation of the Japanese example became almost a passion was the French colony of Madagascar (Malagasy). In the second decade of the twentieth century, inspired by a series of articles on Japan by a Protestant pastor by the name of Ravelojaona, a secret society of intellectuals and prelates known as the VVS (which in the local language stood for 'iron, stone and network') sprang up determined to repeat the Japanese experience of development in independence. Alarmed by the dangerous potentialities of the movement, the French authorities clamped down on the leaders of the movement on convenient charges of colluding with the avowed enemy, Germany.¹⁴

But these comparisons with Japan and attempts to emulate her experience in modernization suffered all too often from inadequate understanding of pre-Meiji Japanese history, or what Ian Inkster (cited above) has characterized as 'historical particularity, ignorance and contextual inappropriateness'.¹⁵ The gist of the matter was that Tokugawa Japan had

¹⁰ See, in this respect, the critical analysis of Ian Inkster, *Japan as a Development Model? Relative Backwardness and Technological Transfer* (1980) as well as the contrast with the Indian experience drawn by Ingeborg Y. Wendt, *Japanische Dynamik und Indische Stagnation? Eine Antwort auf theoretische Entwicklungsmodelle* (1978).

¹¹ For a sample of the Institute's numerous publications in the sphere of development modelling, see Tetteh A. Kofi, *Institutional Model of Development and Underdevelopment: A Comparative Analysis of the West and Japan and the Third World* (1979).

¹² Takeshi Hayashi, 'Some Lessons from Japan's Modernization', in Michio Nagai, ed., *Development in the Non-Western World* (1984).

¹³ Sunchai Wun'Gaeo, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in Japanese Social Structure: Toward a Sociology of Thai Perception', in Kunio Yoshihara, ed., *Thai Perceptions of Japanese Modernization* (1989): 46; Seif El-Wady Romahi, 'Diplomacy of Resources in Arab-Japanese Relations: Economic Survey and Political Analysis', in *Arab-Japanese Relations: Tokyo Symposium* (1980): 31, 33; Raouf Abbas Hamed, *The Japanese and Egyptian Enlightenment. A Comparative Study of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi* (1990).

¹⁴ Mervyn Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered. A History from Early Times to Independence* (1978): 259-60; Pierre V  rin, *Madagascar* (1990): 163-4.

¹⁵ Inkster: i.

assets which made the task of rapid modernization easy. These assets, which were not always so readily available in the countries which were compared with Japan, included cultural homogeneity, a high rate of literacy, extensive urbanization, a strong mercantile base, developed cottage industries and a long period of peace.¹⁶

A good instance of such divergence in the modernization experience is the case of Thailand (formerly Siam). At about the same time that Japan was undergoing the Meiji revolution, Thailand was experiencing its own version of reform under its enlightened king, Chulalongkorn. He and his enthusiastic followers, interestingly enough known as the Young Siam, were able to introduce a series of institutional reforms known in history as the Cakhkri reformation. Japan and Thailand shared the same advantage of cultural homogeneity, but Thailand could not achieve the same depth and intensity of modernization as Japan. Factors that have been adduced to explain this divergence include Thailand's lower literacy rate, the stagnant nature of its agriculture, its lukewarm approach to the import of foreign technology, the orientation of its educational system towards public administration rather than science and technology and its much smaller consumer population.¹⁷

In light of the above considerations, a more instructive approach to the study of modernization would be to examine the process in each country within the context of its own peculiar history, for, as already suggested, no two countries can have the same point of departure or follow the same path of development. For our purposes, since it is impossible to examine all experiences, we shall focus on the countries whose history of modernization has had the closest bearing on the Ethiopian situation.

Russia, with its Orthodox Christian background and subsequent revolutionary transformation, provides some striking parallels with Ethiopia, although admittedly the differences are as important, if not more. Russia's interaction with the West could be said to have started with the rise of Peter the Great (1682–1725) and attained its climax with the 1917 revolution. Likewise, one can say that the process of modern transformation in Ethiopia, first tentatively suggested by Emperor Tēwodros in the mid-nineteenth century, attained its finale in the 1974 revolution. The Russian process of Westernization, with which the course of Russian intellectual history was closely associated, was initiated by the nobility but soon came to be appropriated by the educated elite, the intelligentsia. It is to Russian intellectual history that we owe that highly captivating term. First coined

¹⁶ Douglas H. Mendel, 'Japan as a Model for Developing Nations', in Edmund Skrzypczak, ed., *Japan's Modern Century* (1968): 191–6. See also Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (1974): 448–52, 455–6.

¹⁷ Yasukichi Yasuba and Likhit Dhiravegin, 'Initial Conditions, Institutional Changes, Policy, and their Consequences: Siam and Japan, 1850–1914', in Kazushi Ohkawa and Gustav Ranis, eds, *Japan and the Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis* (1985): 19–29; Sommai Hoontrakool, 'A Comparative Study of the Economic and Political Developments in Japan and Thailand between 1868 and 1912', in Andrew J.L. Armour, ed., *Asia and Japan. The Search for Modernization and Identity* (1985): 66–80.

by a rather obscure novelist in the 1860s,¹⁸ it came to have a currency well beyond the specific time and place for which it was originally meant. The term had the connotation not only of a critical and independent spirit but also of a commitment to revolutionary transformation. It could be described as the Russian version of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment or the Romantics of the early nineteenth century, 'both in its headily ideological temper and in its impact on the world'.¹⁹

The most striking feature of the Russian intelligentsia, from the Decembrists to the Bolsheviks, was the passion, single-mindedness and sense of urgency with which they tackled the issues of the day. As one observer stated: 'One of the most engaging qualities of the Russian intellectuals of the old regime is the moral passion with which they attacked the great questions of the human condition, and their pursuit to a ruthlessly logical conclusion – in life no less than in thought – of the heady answers such exalted inquiry invariably brings.'²⁰

Such passion and sense of urgency has been admirably encapsulated in the titles of some of their famous treatises, such as 'Who is to Blame?', 'What is to be Done?' or 'Who are the Friends of the People?'. Another aspect of this singular commitment is the earnestness with which the Russian intelligentsia championed the ideas of change, ideas which were rarely of Russian origin. This is how Isaiah Berlin describes this sense of total commitment:

that objective truth exists, that it can be discovered, and that life, individual and social, can be lived in its light – this belief is more characteristic of the Russians than of anyone else in the modern world ... It is this faith that, for good or ill, has enabled it [i.e. the vanguard of the Russian intelligentsia] to move mountains ... it surrendered itself to what it believed to be true with a lifelong singleness of purpose seldom known outside of religious life in the West.²¹

In view of China's long record of civilization and eventual adoption of the communist system, its experience might also be apposite for a discussion of modernization in Ethiopia. What set the Chinese experience apart from the Russian one was the long ancestry of what one may call bureaucratic intellectuals, the mandarins, and the deeply entrenched Confucian world-view. Facing the challenge of the West in the mid-nineteenth century, an enlightened segment of the feudal ruling class emerged urging understanding of the West in order to compete and survive. These progressive intellectuals urged reform by an enlightened monarchy to avert revolution from below. But side by side with this reformist movement went a series of

¹⁸ Martin Malia, 'What is the Intelligentsia?', in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Russian Intelligentsia* (1961): 1. The suggestion is made that it may have been derived from the Latin word *intelligentia*, meaning 'discernment' or 'intelligence'.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 1.

²¹ In Marc Raeff, *Russian Intellectual History, an Anthology* (1966): 6. See also Benjamin Schwartz, 'The Intelligentsia in Communist China. A Tentative Comparison', in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Russian Intelligentsia* (1961): 166ff.

peasant uprisings which culminated in the Taiping rebellion. Couched in millenarian and egalitarian phraseology, this mass movement rejected both the West and the conservative Confucian tradition.

In the wake of China's traumatic defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894, a more militant and large-scale reform movement was born. Through its organ, *The Chronicle of China and the World*, this movement popularized the reforms of Peter the Great of Russia and the Meiji Restoration in Japan. In the forefront of the movement for the emulation of the Meiji experience was the Chinese intellectual Huang Tsun-hsien, who urged the adoption of such reforms as the rationalization of bureaucracy, promotion of trade and industry, codification of laws, upgrading of the military, according dignity to manual labour and the simplification of the writing system.²² Translations of Western classics included Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* and J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*.²³

But the Meiji experience could not be repeated in China, thereby leaving the revolutionary option as the only plausible one. The first two decades of the twentieth century pitted reformers and revolutionaries against one another. From this confrontation was born the nationalist movement led by the famous Sun-Yat Sen, 'the dominant revolutionary personality, the center of gravity ... around which revolved a constellation of intellectual activists and politicized students who sought an end to Manchu overlordship and to the Confucian monarchy itself'.²⁴ Sun's heirs eventually diverged into the two antithetical branches of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, now crystallized into the two disparate polities of Taiwan and mainland China.

Another country whose experience might be of pertinence to Ethiopia is Turkey. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of Turks who had the opportunity to travel in the West came back struck forcefully by their country's backwardness, particularly in the spheres of industry and science but ultimately in the mode of governance as well. This acute awareness gave rise to a movement known as the Young Ottomans (intended to embrace the entire Ottoman empire and modelled after similar movements in Europe such as that of Young Italy). The movement was inspired by the poet Namik Kemal and included in its leadership members of the ruling elite like Mustafa Fazil, the disgruntled brother of Khedive Isma'il of Egypt who had forfeited his title to the Egyptian throne because of a change in the law of succession. The granting of a constitution by the Ottoman sultan Abdul Aziz in 1876 appeared to be a fulfilment of the Young Ottoman dream.²⁵

But the experiment in constitutional government was short-lived. Probably because of this, the reformist Young Ottomans were soon superseded by the more militant Young Turks. Founded in 1889, the centenary

²² Noriko Kamachi, *Reform in China. Huang Tsun-hsien and the Japanese Model* (1981): 167, 259.

²³ He Zhaowu, *An Intellectual History of China* (1991): 422-3, 431ff., 461-2, 480.

²⁴ Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China. A Narrative History* (1981): 135.

²⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1965): 127-33, 149-54, 170.

of the French revolution, by students of the Imperial Military Medical School and modelled after the secret Italian society known as the Carbonari, the Young Turk movement, which later developed into the Committee of Union and Progress, aimed at nothing short of the overthrow of the sultan. A coup that the committee planned in 1896 was aborted. On the question of nationalities, which was so vital in a heterogeneous society like the Ottoman empire, it urged its resolution within the context of 'general reforms in Turkey'.²⁶

As in so many other Asian and African countries, the Japanese experience in modernization began to arouse interest in Turkey at the turn of the century, although it was difficult to imagine two more incongruous political entities than homogeneous Japan and the heterogeneous Ottoman empire.²⁷ The Young Turks managed to come to power in 1908 through what amounted to a military coup d'état, or, as one writer put it, a 'model for military intervention in politics'.²⁸ Motivated by the desire to restore constitutional government, they ended up by injecting an authoritarian tone into Turkish politics. Determined to save the empire, they presided over its dissolution. Yet on the ashes of the old empire was born the new and vigorous Turkey of Kemal Atatürk, who opted for a policy of unambiguous Westernization.²⁹

In Egypt, which is geographically – and historically – nearer to Ethiopia, modernization began with the new dynasty inaugurated in 1805 by the Albanian adventurer, Muhammad Ali, in the wake of the brief but significant Napoleonic occupation (1799–1801). Muhammad's long reign was characterized not only by territorial expansion but also the development of agriculture, the expansion of education and the dissemination of ideas through translation and publication. A distinctive aspect of this intellectual revival was the fact that it was all conducted under the patronage and in the service of the state. As P.J. Vatikiotis sums it up:

The first educators and intellectuals in nineteenth-century Egypt were essentially state officials performing specialized tasks of teaching, translation and writing. Their aim was to transmit knowledge from Europe in the service of the State, and they were selected by the ruler to perform these tasks. Their primary duty for a period of fifty years (1830–1880) was to instruct an ever-increasing number of Egyptians to become qualified, competent public servants. It was not their role or function as intellectuals to question or criticize, in order to undermine, the prevailing political order.³⁰

²⁶ Ernest Edmonson Ramsaur, *The Young Turks. Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (1965): 14–41.

²⁷ For Turkish fascination with the Japanese model, see Selcuk Esenbel, 'Japanese Studies in Turkey: A New Field since the 1980s', *Nichibunken Newsletter* (1990): 5–7. A critical and comparative appraisal of Japanese and Turkish modernization is to be found in the concluding chapter in R.E. Ward and D.A. Rustow, eds, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (1964): 434–68.

²⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks. The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908–1914* (1969): 163.

²⁹ For further assessments of the Young Turks, see Lewis: 208–9, 222–3; Ahmad: 15–17, 152–62.

³⁰ P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, 3rd edn (1985): 121.

What is also remarkable about the whole process is the fact that Al Azhar University, which had hitherto epitomized the Islamic educational establishment, adjusted itself to the new situation and was to produce 'from its ranks the first Egyptians to make their mark in the modern educational and intellectual renaissance'.³¹ Throughout the nineteenth century a cautious attempt to reconcile the new ideas of the West with the old values of Islam was to be the hallmark of that intellectual awakening. Nobody symbolized that effort better than Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi, generally regarded as the spiritual father of Egyptian and Arab nationalism. His most famous work was the *Rihla*, an illuminating diary of his five-year stay in France (1826–31). He was also instrumental in the opening of the School of Languages, which was to play a seminal role in the field of translation that was so essential to the dissemination of Western ideas.

As in Turkey, the early liberal phase of intellectual awakening was superseded in the twentieth century by a more militantly nationalistic and strictly Islamic movement under the name of Young Egypt. In contrast to similar movements elsewhere that had had the 'Young' attribute, the Egyptian rendition exhibited some Fascist tendencies; it developed links with the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany and its paramilitary youth organization was called the Green Shirts, so reminiscent of the Fascist Black Shirts. This characteristic probably had as much to do with the time of the establishment of the association as with the overriding character of Egyptian nationalist resentment at British overlordship. As so often, the old adage 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend' became operative. The association was founded by a lawyer, Ahmad Husayn, in 1933, ten years after Mussolini's famous march on Rome and in the very same year that Hitler seized power in Germany. Along with the even more fundamentalist group known as the Muslim Brothers, Young Egypt produced a number of the radical army officers who rallied behind Gamal Abdel Nasser to topple the Muhammad Ali dynasty and establish the new Egyptian republic in 1952.³²

Elsewhere in much of Africa, European colonialism held sway from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Modernization, as we have tried to perceive it here, came about through the midwifery of colonial rule. African reaction to that process generally followed the pattern of initial adoption followed by critical rejection. In a succinct survey of African reaction to colonial rule, the Ghanaian historian Adu Boahen has identified two major phases, a reformist and a revolutionary one, with the Fascist Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 serving as the cut-off point. In the first phase, while the rural masses sometimes resorted to rebellion and insurrection to overthrow colonial rule (such as the *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe and the Maji Maji in Tanzania), the elite tended to prefer legal measures to mitigate the excesses of colonial rule. They did this through the agency of the press, trade unions and a host of cultural and professional associations and societies. Another way of protesting against the cultural

³¹ *Ibid.*: 91.

³² *Ibid.*: 318–30.

domination of the colonial rulers and asserting African identity was through the independent churches (Ethiopian or pentecostal) that cropped up in many parts of Africa, particularly in the south and east.³³

The focal point, as far as elite response to colonial rule was concerned, was colonial education, which produced the elite that first served colonial rule and subsequently became its grave-digger. It was by and large from the ranks of the colonial civil service that the leaders of the nationalist movement fighting for independence emerged, for, as one observer has summarized, 'innovations introduced with one objective in mind may have effects that outweigh and even counteract the original objective'.³⁴ The revolution that swept across the continent in 1960, when colony after colony attained independence, was prophesied decades before by Africa's pioneer intellectuals.³⁵

This process of adoption and rejection or, perhaps more accurately, using the instrument of the West against itself can be seen in the case of Nigeria and Ghana. In Nigeria, Western education, which one observer has described as 'one of the most revolutionary influences operative ... since the beginning of the European intrusion',³⁶ succeeded in giving that multi-ethnic entity its *lingua franca* (English) and a new political elite. Sponsorship for that education came mainly from the missionaries and in spite of official colonial policy which had sought to buttress the traditional authorities as partners of indirect rule. That is one reason why modern education made less headway in the predominantly Muslim and hierarchically organized north than among the Yoruba and the Ibo.

Official British caution was not entirely unwarranted, for it was from the ranks of the educated elite that the nationalist movement fighting for independence emerged. First the student movement (such as the Nigerian Union of Students and the more broadly defined West African Students' Union, WASU) and later the political parties (such as the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, NCNC, and the Action Group) were led and sustained by that elite.³⁷ Perhaps no other Nigerian typifies better this process of initial fascination followed by eventual indignation at the inequities of colonial rule than Nnamdi Azikiwe, the pioneer of the Nigerian nationalist movement. His pursuit of education had taken him across the seas to the United States, where he had to support himself by being employed in various odd jobs ranging from that of a dishwasher to a sparring partner for a boxer as he attained various academic qualifications.³⁸

In Ghana, or the Gold Coast as it was known before independence, the

³³ A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (1985): 63–93.

³⁴ David B. Abernethy, *The Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case* (1969): 15.

³⁵ Lilyan Kesteloot, *Intellectual Origins of the African Revolution* (1968).

³⁶ Hugh H. Smythe, 'The Educational Foundation of Nigerian Politicians', in Hans N. Weiler, ed., *Erziehung und Politik in Nigeria. Education and Politics in Nigeria* (1964): 155.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 156, 158; Abernethy: 118–21; Helmuth Peets, 'The Role of Education in British Colonial Policy in Nigeria', in Weiler, ed.: 108–9; James S. Coleman, *Nigeria. Background to Revolution* (1960): 204–7, 239–43.

³⁸ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Renascent Africa* (1969); Smythe, 'The Educational Foundation': 176.

contradictions between the traditional rulers and the educated elite was reportedly even more acute than elsewhere in British Africa. Higher education, which was a rare phenomenon under colonial rule, had a long ancestry there, going back to the establishment of the Fourah Bay College in the first half of the nineteenth century. Denied access to senior administrative posts, most of its graduates opted for private practice in law and the medical profession. But already at that stage there was some articulation of political demands, as evidenced in the establishment of the short-lived Fanti Confederation in 1868 and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, set up to oppose the alienation of African land to European companies, in 1897.³⁹ In the twentieth century the connection between Western education and political militancy became even more clearly articulated, producing perhaps the most charismatic and influential African nationalist leader of the 1950s and 1960s, Kwame Nkrumah.

In francophone and lusophone Africa, the process of acculturation attained such a level that it produced veritable black Portuguese or black French. This process of *déracinement* (uprooting) was eloquently articulated by Léopold Sédar Senghor, the Senegalese poet and president, in the following manner:

with docility we accepted the values of the West: its discursive reason and its techniques ... Our ambition was to become photographic negatives of the colonizers; 'black-skinned Frenchmen'. It went even further, for we would have blushed, if we could have blushed, about our black skin, our frizzled hair, our flat noses, above all for the values of our traditional civilization ... Our people ... caused us shame.⁴⁰

Yet, despite this gallicization process, there always remained a line which the blacks could not cross. Even if and when that line could be crossed, the loss of the original identity bred resentment. And thus was born a vigorous negation of white culture and an equally powerful reaffirmation of blackness.

Such a reaction had already manifested itself among a group of Africans who had gone through a similar process of assimilation before, the creoles. The creoles of Sierra Leone, who had been considered as 'black English' until about the middle of the nineteenth century, made a dramatic return to their African roots, searching for African names and African dresses.⁴¹ Their quest for their roots in Pharaonic Egypt seems a forerunner of the more recent African-American search for similar roots. Another group of freed slaves, who came to be known as the Yoruba creoles, made a much more successful identification with their roots by reintegrating into Yoruba life. One of them, Samuel Johnson, attained lasting fame with his *History of the Yorubas*.⁴²

But it was with the francophone Africans and Caribbeans that the

³⁹ Phillip Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (1965): 93–6.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Jacques Louis Hymans, *Léopold Sédar Senghor. An Intellectual History* (1971): 16.

⁴¹ Leo Spitzer, 'The Sierra Leone Creoles, 1870–1900', in Curtin, ed., *Africa and the West*: 100–19.

⁴² Jean Herskovits, 'The Sierra Leoneans of Yorubaland', in *ibid.*

reassertion of black values and black personality attained its peak. This movement first crystallized in the interwar period around a journal dedicated to the fostering of black culture, *Revue du Monde Noir*. Cultural liberation, it was argued, was a precondition for political liberation. After the second world war, under the patronage of such celebrities as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, André Gide and Michel Leiris, the even more influential and durable journal of black culture, *Présence Africaine*, was born.⁴³ The views of these powerful intellectuals ranged from the gentle poetry of Aimé Césaire to the revolutionary tracts of Frantz Fanon, both from the French Caribbean. In Africa Senghor emerged as the eloquent spokesman of the movement. And the reaffirmation of black dignity and black values, which Senghor strove to convey through his preferred medium of poetry, came to be known as *négritude*.

In the academic sphere, Senghor's compatriot, Cheikh Anta Diop, asserted the antiquity and precedence of African civilization, assertions whose echoes are being felt to this day, notably through some of his ardent followers and admirers like the Ethiopian poet laureate, Tsegaye Gebre Medhin. Diop's mission was essentially to counter the balkanization and cultural negation of Africa with the assertion of its continental unity and its primacy in the history of the world as the cradle of mankind and the ultimate origin, through Pharaonic Egypt, of Greco-Roman civilization.⁴⁴

In lusophone Africa, a black cultural movement began to appear in the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique. The Cape Verdean journal, *Claridade*, served as an important forum for that movement. One of these intellectuals who rediscovered their African heritage was Amílcar Cabral, the leader of the independence movement of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands. Dissatisfied with the orthodox Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the African condition, Cabral and his fellow students in Lisbon turned to what they termed as the 're-Africanization of the spirit'. They launched a journal known as *Mensagem*, equivalent to the francophone *Présence Africaine*. Cabral was soon joined by other future leaders of the independence movement in Portuguese Africa, Marcelino dos Santos of Mozambique and Agostino Neto of Angola. It was this cultural awareness that the leaders eventually translated into political action characterized by large-scale mobilization of the masses.⁴⁵

In southern Africa, reaction to the cultural hegemony of the West assumed a religious character. Religious separatist movements sprang up in South Africa and the British colonies of Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Because of their identification with biblical Ethiopia and, subsequent to the Adwa victory, with historical Ethiopia, these movements came to be called Ethiopianist. They also drew their inspiration from the independent black churches of the United States,

⁴³ Hymans, Chaps 8 and 21.

⁴⁴ Mamadou Diouf, 'Des historiens et des histoires, pourquoi faire? L'historiographie africaine entre l'Etat et les Communautés', mimeo, n.d.: 14-17.

⁴⁵ Patrick Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral, Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (1983): 32-46.

which had had a long history of the assertion of black identity through the religious medium. The most famous of these religious movements in southern Africa was the one in Nyasaland led by John Chilembwe. It culminated in an uprising in 1915, which was crushed after briefly causing terror among the white settler community.⁴⁶

Such, in brief, was the global and continental framework within which Ethiopian intellectual history unfolded. A full account of that history, whose repercussions are still far from over, would require volumes. The scope of this particular study is limited to an examination of the careers, the ideas and the social and political impact of a group of intellectuals who were active in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Few other groups of Ethiopian intellectuals articulated their ideas with as much clarity and coherence as these pioneers. Although a number of studies have been done on these intellectuals individually, fewer efforts have been made to study them as a group. This is what is attempted here. Before we proceed to investigate the group in depth, however, it would be of some value to depict the Ethiopian intellectual background and identify the antecedents of the characters of this study.

Ethiopian antecedents

Ethiopia's conversion to Christianity in the fourth century AD determined the course of the country's history in more ways than one. While Aksum had had strong and sustained links with the Mediterranean world even in pre-Christian times, the introduction of Christianity gave those relations a new and more sharpened focus, tying the country through religious bonds with Egypt in particular and the eastern Mediterranean in general. One way in which interaction between Ethiopia and the Levant increased was through the pilgrimages that Ethiopian Christians came to make to Jerusalem after the country's conversion to Christianity. Centres of pilgrimage, whether it be Jerusalem or Mecca, have been important in history not only as sites for the expression of religious devotion but also as venues for the exchange of goods and ideas, with considerable impact on economy and society.

Contacts between Christian Ethiopia and the eastern Mediterranean reached a high point in the beginning of the second millennium of our era. The Zagwé period (c. 1150–1270), which is generally portrayed to have been a rather insular period of Ethiopian history, actually saw the most enduring manifestation of these contacts. The monolithic churches of Lalibāla, for which that period is so famous, were laid out in a manner designed to reproduce the Holy City in central Ethiopia. Not only did the

⁴⁶ Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa. The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873–1964* (1965): 56–8, 85–92; George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African. John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (1958).

number of Ethiopian pilgrims to Jerusalem increase but the Ethiopian community was also given the Der Sultan monastery by the Muslim victor in the Crusades, Saladin.⁴⁷

It was also probably the presence of this Ethiopian community in Jerusalem that gave rise to or nourished the famous story of Prester John, which set the context for Ethiopia's relations with Europe in the first half of the second millennium. The pilgrims not only filtered to Europe information about the mighty kings of medieval Ethiopia that gave flesh and blood to the initially rather hazy perception of Prester John but also encouraged closer contacts with Christian Europe in order to bring Ethiopia out of the isolation that Fatimid and Mamluk Egypt had placed it in.⁴⁸

Interaction with the Levant also appears to have been instrumental in the flowering of the *Ēwostatéwos* movement in the fourteenth century. *Ēwostatéwos* was a monk of *Sārayé* whose divergence from the religious establishment on the question of observing the Sabbath (he being for it) and the attendant persecutions that he suffered forced him and his followers into exile. This period of exile fortified the *Ēwostatéwos* party both intellectually and organizationally. As Tadesse Tamrat writes:

During their sojourn in the Levant they probably had much access to the literature of the early Christian Church, and they may have brought their own copies of religious books back with them. The traditions of great love for books which we have about the leading members of the movement probably arise from this. An active literary development appears to have taken place among them during this period, and not only did it strengthen their own position but also seems to have served in time as a decisive landmark in the cultural renaissance of the whole of the Ethiopian Church.⁴⁹

The outcome of this organizational and intellectual strength of the *Ēwostatéans* was that they came to have their position on the Sabbath accepted by Emperor *Zāra Ya'eqob*, who appreciated the inherently nationalist content of the *Ēwostatéan* stand vis-a-vis the Egyptian metropolitan.

An even more vibrant Ethiopian community came to be established in Rome, inside the Vatican, in the sixteenth century. Their convent, known as the 'San Stefano degli Abissini', evolved into an important centre for the study of Ethiopian history and languages, hosting such famous scholars as Abba Gorgoryos, on whom the German scholar Hiob Ludolf relied so heavily in writing his *History of Ethiopia*. A couple of centuries later, another Ethiopian scholar, *Däbtära Keflä-Giyorgis*, played an equally crucial role as teacher of the person who could be described as the father of Ethiopian studies in Italy, Ignazio Guidi.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia* (1972): 57–8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 251–3, 256–7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 209–10.

⁵⁰ Aleme Eshete, 'Bäqädmō Zāmānat Kā1889 Bāfit Wech Agär Yātāmaru Ityopyawyanoch Tarik', *EjE* (1973): 115–19.

The coming of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century represented another important chapter in Ethiopia's interaction with the West. The Jesuits set themselves up at Frémona, near the town of Adwa, which became their main centre for the propagation of Catholicism. Not much seems to be known about the Ethiopian converts to Catholicism, except of course for the Emperor Susenyos and his brother and viceroy in Gojjam, *Ras Se'elä Krestos*. We know, however, that one of the converts, *Fequrä-Egzi* by name, was designated as the emperor's envoy to Europe. He left in the company of one of the Jesuit priests, Father Antonio Fernandes, but, after a rather perilous journey across southern Ethiopia, they had to retrace their steps back to the north, their mission aborted.⁵¹

Possibly as a result of the interaction between the Orthodox tradition and the Jesuit challenge, there arose in the seventeenth century the rather unusual philosopher by the name of *Zära Ya'eqob* of Aksum, and his disciple *Wäldä Heywät* of Enfraz. They wrote two treatises which, in their rationalism and originality, stand out in solitary splendour, for they had neither antecedents nor immediate sequel. Partly because of this fact, Conti Rossini has challenged the authorship of *Zära Ya'eqob's* treatise, attributing the work to the nineteenth-century Italian Capuchin missionary, *Giusto d'Urbino*. *Tamrat Ammanuél*, one of the intellectuals whose career is discussed below, also concurred with this conclusion.⁵² But *Claude Sumner* has disputed this contention and devoted a great deal of research to showing the Ethiopian character of the two philosophers.⁵³

For nearly two centuries after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1632, Ethiopia lived in almost absolute isolation from Europe. This period came to an end at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Europe rediscovered Ethiopia and the rest of Africa under the triple banner of commerce, evangelism and exploration. The Protestants, more specifically the Church Missionary Society (CMS) based in England and Switzerland (Basel), pioneered missionary activity in Ethiopia. Evangelism, as so often, was attended by the provision of Western education, be it by establishing schools in Ethiopia or by sending the young converts abroad.

Among such beneficiaries of Western education, some of whom later came to occupy important positions as secretaries and interpreters to Ethiopian monarchs, were *Berru Pétros*, *Mahdärä-Qal Täwäldä-Mädhén* and *Mercha Wärqé*. *Berru*, more commonly known as *Berru Wälqayté* because of his place of origin in northwestern Ethiopia, first went to Jerusalem in the 1840s at the age of 18. In 1852 he was sent by *Samuel Gobat*, who had pioneered CMS missionary activity in Ethiopia in the 1830s and was bishop of Jerusalem at the time, to the CMS college on the

⁵¹ C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646* (1954): xxxviii, 143ff.

⁵² *BS*, 9.11.13.

⁵³ See his *Ethiopian Philosophy*, Vol. II (1976). Sumner argues that the fact that doubt is cast only on *Zära Ya'eqob's* treatise and not on the complementary and equally significant one of *Wäldä-Heywät* makes Conti Rossini's assertions questionable. *Ibid.*: 74, citing I. Kraqkovskii.

island of Malta.⁵⁴ Through his uncle, *Däbtära* Tāwäldä-Mädhen, Berru came to know Antoine d'Abbadie, the great French traveller and scholar of the nineteenth century; Tāwäldä-Mädhen himself had apparently once accompanied Antoine from Gondär to Jerusalem.⁵⁵ And it was to Antoine that Berru confided his experiences: the subjects that he studied (English, Latin, Arabic, French, world history, physical geography and – his favourite – the Bible),⁵⁶ his dislike for the British ('those arrogant discriminators')⁵⁷ and his squabbles with another Ethiopian student at the college, Mahdärä-Qal.⁵⁸ His correspondence also revealed how he had to steer carefully between Protestantism, the religion of his sponsors, and Catholicism, that of his confidant Antoine d'Abbadie. After completing his studies, he started to work as an employee of the Egyptian Telegraph Office in Cairo, then moved into business (mainly importing arms), and ended up as agent ('consul') of Emperor Yohannes at Massawa. As we will see below, one of his sons, Mikael Berru, was to attain prominence as the official interpreter of the British legation in the early twentieth century.⁵⁹

Mahdärä-Qal, a native of Adyabo in modern northwestern Tegräy, had come to Malta after three years in France, where he had gone in 1843 in the company of another French traveller, Théophile Lefebvre. In Malta, Mahdärä-Qal apparently acquired sufficient mastery of the English language to correspond at length with his British patron.⁶⁰ This proficiency in English was shared by the third product of missionary education, Mercha Wärqé.

Mercha came from a family in Adwa with a long history of contacts with foreigners, first with Armenians (his paternal grandfather was in fact an Armenian trader),⁶¹ then with the British (William Coffin, who had accompanied Henry Salt in 1810 and resided in Tegré for three decades, was his brother-in-law). Mercha and his brother Gäbru were sent to Bombay in 1837 and returned in 1849. They are said to have opened a school in their native town, and Mercha eventually rose to become successively secretary and interpreter of Emperors Téwodros and Yohannes.⁶²

⁵⁴ Samuel Gobat, *Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia in Furtherance of the Objects of the Church Missionary Society* (1834).

⁵⁵ Sven Rubenson, ed., *Acta Aethiopica. Volume I. Correspondence and Treaties 1800–1854* (1987): 164, 177, 232.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 233.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 244

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 246.

⁵⁹ Aleme, 'Bäqädmo Zämänat', pp. 125–34; see pp. 184–5 for Mikael Berru.

⁶⁰ Rubenson, *Acta*, I: 250–1; Aleme, 'Bäqädmo Zämänat', p. 119.

⁶¹ According to Rubenson, *Acta*, I: 117. Aleme ('Bäqädmo Zämänat', pp. 124–5) claims, however, that it was Mercha's father who was an Armenian and had adopted the Ethiopian name of Wärqé. Johann Martin Flad writes, on the other hand, that Wärqé was 'einen geborenen Armenier' (Armenian by birth): *60 Jahre in der Mission unter den Falaschas in Abessinien* (1922): 52. Wärqé had once served Subagadis, the Tegréan ruler, as envoy to Egypt: Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence* (1976): 61–2.

⁶² Rubenson, *Acta*, I: 116–17; Flad: 52.

The rise of Têwodros in the 1850s seems to have provided all three – Berru, Mercha and Mahdärä-Qal – with the first opportunity to put the language skills they had acquired abroad in the service of the state. Their training came to be an asset at a time when there was so much interaction with foreigners; they served as secretaries, translators, interpreters and envoys.⁶³ Mercha was in fact elevated to the title of *liqä mäkwä* and is described by Sven Rubenson as ‘probably Kasa’s [i.e. Yohannes’s] most important adviser on foreign affairs’.⁶⁴ He mediated between Kasa and the Napier expedition in 1867–8 and represented Emperor Yohannes in the negotiations with the Egyptians after their second military defeat at Gura in 1876.⁶⁵ It was Berru and another translator, Samuél Giyorgis, who translated for Têwodros the uncomplimentary remarks about the emperor in the writings of the missionaries Stern and Rosenthal.⁶⁶ In an act of furious retribution, as is common knowledge, Têwodros imprisoned the missionaries along with others and thereby invited British intervention. Mahdärä-Qal appears to have been Yohannes’s chief translator, sometimes even taking the liberty of adding his own words in the emperor’s correspondence with the Europeans.⁶⁷

In the nineteenth century, perhaps no group of people was the target of missionary activity as much as the Fälasä were. It was as if there was a tacit agreement between Ethiopian rulers and European missionaries that the labours of the latter could be directed to mutual advantage towards the recalcitrant Fälasä rather than the Orthodox Christians. Consequently, Fälasä youth also came to be among the first beneficiaries of Western education. Four of them, Haylu Wäsän, Mikaél Arägawī (who was actually of a Christian family) and the brothers Samani and Sänbätu Daniél were sent to the Chrischona mission in Switzerland around 1869. Haylu perished under the inclement European weather and the survivors returned to Ethiopia in 1873. They set up a thriving mission in Azäzo, in the outskirts of Gondär, where they were able to convert a number of their countrymen.⁶⁸

Worthy of note here, and with a significant bearing on our discussion of the twentieth-century situation, is the fact that it was not only the foreign-educated who acted as a medium between the Europeans, missionary and lay, and Ethiopians, high or low. The Ethiopian church education has produced the *däbtära*, combining traditional learning and an unusually canny appreciation of changing circumstances and a capacity to adjust their steps accordingly. The missionaries registered some of their most successful conversions among this sector of the Ethiopian clergy. The most famous of them was probably *Däbtära Zänäb*, the chronicler of Emperor Têwodros. The German missionary Johann Martin Flad cites at least three others:

⁶³ Rubenson, *Survival*: 284.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 281.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 280, 330.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 233.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 304, 324.

⁶⁸ Flad: 265, 311–36, 342–3; James Quirin, *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews. A History of the Beta Israel (Fälasä) to 1920* (1992): 183–4.

Wäldä-Sellasé, Berru Webé and Alāmé. The first of these was sent to the Chrischona mission in Switzerland; the second was among the first and the most important of Flad's converts among the Fālasha.⁶⁹

The arrival of the Italians and their determined quest for territory inevitably required the service of interpreters. Among the first picked by them was Pétros Giyorgis. Unfortunately for them, however, Pétros, who used to call himself 'Pétros the Ethiopian' and thoroughly lived up to the designation, proved more an enemy than an aid. He kept secret contacts with both Emperor Yohannes and his governor of the Mārāb Mellash, *Ras* Alula, and apprised them of Italian intentions and plans. One could in fact sense the influence of Pétros in some of the forceful remarks that Alula made to the British emissary, Sir Gerald Portal, during his visit in the wake of the Italian disaster at Dogali in January 1887.⁷⁰

A letter that Pétros wrote to Alula on 18 January 1887, eight days before the battle of Dogali, was to all intents and purposes a passionate call to arms:

ታሪክ አላነበቡም ይሆናል እ[ን]ጅ ፈረንጅና ቀንቁን አንድ ነው ቀንቁን ከትል
ሁሉ ያንግል ነገር ጥን ታላቁን ጥንድ በልቶ አድርቆ ይጥሰዋል እነዚህም
መጀመሪያ በንግድ ስም ይመጡና ጥቂት በጥቂት አየነቡ የሰውን አገር
ይወርግሉ ስለዚህ አሁን ተሎ ደብድቧቸው ይበቁ አለዚያ አገርዎ መጥፋቱ
ነው ... ዛፍ ግያድግ በአገር ጣት ይነጫል ካደገ በኋላ ጥን ብዙ መጋዘና
መጥቢያ ያስፈልገዋል እንደዚሁያምራ ግልገል ክንፉ ግያድግ የኋ ዓመት
ልጅ ከዛፍ አውርዶ ሲጫወትበት ይውላል፥ ክንፉ ካደገ በኋላ ጥን ከሰው
እጅ ሥጋ ነጥቆ አሰከ አየር ይወጣልና የግራግኘው የሰም እ[ን]ደዚሁም
እነዚህ ናቸውና ለአገርዎ ለግዛትዎ ለጠጅዎ ለሙግዎ ከሁሉም ይልቅ ለታላቅ
ክብርዎ ይጥክሩ

You may not have read history. But the *fārānj* [i.e. Europeans] are like an earworm. Earworm is the smallest of worms. But it will eat up and destroy the largest of trees. Likewise, the *fārānj* first come in the name of trade; gradually, they end up taking over the country. So, hit them now, wipe them out, or else your country is lost ... You can move a sapling with your toe; but once it is grown, it will require many axes and saws. Likewise, a six-year old kid can play with a baby crow. But, once its wings are grown, it will snatch lumps of meat from a man's hand and fly to the air ... Therefore, defend your country, your province, your privileges, above all your honour.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Flad: 198, 264, 319; Quirin, *Ethiopian Jews*: 183.

⁷⁰ Gerald Portal, *An Account of the English Mission to King Johannis of Abyssinia in 1887* (n.d.): 38–39.

⁷¹ *Alāqa* Tayyā papers, National Library (Language Academy). The letter is found in a biography of Pétros and *Blatta* Gäbrä-Egziabher compiled by *Alāqa* Kidanä-Maryam, a copy of which is found with the papers of *Alāqa* Tayyā. The manuscript has the Ethiopian year 1880 (i.e. 1888) throughout the narrative. But, from the context, it is obvious that it means 1879EC.

The Italians uncovered his secret dealings with Alula and, after confiscating his goods, sent him back to Alexandria, from where they had apparently picked him in the first place. Using as leverage the Italian hostages he had with him, Alula forced the Italian command at Massawa to restore to Pétros his property; such was his spite for the Italians that he put in a claim for threefold the actual value of the goods confiscated by the Italians.⁷²

Menilek too had the service of Ethiopian interpreters in his relations with Europeans, particularly the Italians, with whom he had some rather sticky points to settle. Notable among these interpreters were the two Yoséfs: *Grazmach* Yoséf Negusé, the famous translator of the Treaty of Wechalé, and his namesake Yoséf ZäGalan. The latter, along with nine other young Ethiopians, had been sent by the Italian missionary Guglielmo Massaja to the Capuchin college in Marseilles around 1873. He subsequently revisited Europe on commercial and official missions and later represented Menilek at Djibouti. He is reputed to have been decorated with the French 'Légion d'honneur' in 1916.⁷³

Another person who was to be closely associated with Menilek as adviser and intermediary with foreigners was Mäshäsha Wärqé, grandson of the Mercha Wärqé mentioned above. Earlier, he had apparently been in the service of Yohannes. In one of his many letters to *Ras* Dargé, Menilek's uncle, in late 1888 when relations between the emperor and his vassal were at their worst, Yohannes placed particular blame on the machinations of Mäshäsha. 'This is all the work of Mäshäsha Wärqé,' the emperor writes in frustration, 'who, having studied all the languages of the world, is now busy learning the devil's tongue.'⁷⁴ Mäshäsha fell into disgrace after being involved in a plot against Menilek in 1892.⁷⁵ But, in the last years of Menilek's reign, he re-emerged into the limelight to head official missions to the Middle East (in 1903 and 1905) and to Austria and Germany (in 1907).⁷⁶

⁷² *Ibid.*; see Aleme Eshete, 'The Role and Position of Foreign-educated Interpreters in Ethiopia (1800–1889)', *JES* (1973): 23–4.

⁷³ Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, *YäHeywät Tarik (Biographie)* (1915EC): 84; MAE, GUERRE 1914–1918, Renseignements, 2.10.16; Aleme, 'Bäqädmo Zämänat': 121.

⁷⁴ Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, *Yälyotyä Tarik* (c. 1928EC): 81.

⁷⁵ Harold Marcus, *Life and Times of Menelik II. Ethiopia 1844–1913* (1975): 144–5.

⁷⁶ FO 371/192, General Report, 10.4.07; Hohler to Grey, 14.6.07.

Two



The Expansion of Modern Education

As suggested in the first chapter, modern education constitutes a major facet of the influence that the West has come to exert on the non-Western world. The whole world has come to adjust to that influence, whether it be in the form of blind imitation or ingenious adaptation. The sweep of that influence has embraced countries – such as India, China, Japan, Persia (Iran), Egypt and Ethiopia – with millennia of civilization and a corresponding system of education. The pattern of reaction to that influence has gone through varying phases of fascination, adoption, rejection and readjustment – often in that order. In that sense, it is not confined to the issue of education in the narrow sense of public instruction. It encompasses the wider world of culture, ideology and world outlook. This relationship could be said to have begun largely in the nineteenth century and is still far from over.

The traditional educational system in Ethiopia grew side by side with the introduction and expansion of Christianity in the fourth century AD. The advent towards the end of the following century of nine clerics from Asia Minor (known as the Nine Saints in Ethiopian church tradition) and their vigorous evangelical activity gave the new religion a broad mass base and a literature. The translation of the Bible and other holy books, as well as the construction of churches and monasteries, established the infrastructure, so to say, for religious and intellectual reflection. An elaborate and hierarchical system of education evolved, taking the student from mastery of the Ethiopic syllabary (the *nebab bêt*) to the interpretation of the holy books (*mätshaf bêt*), via the intervening stages of *zéma bêt* (liturgy) and *gené* (the composition and interpretation of poetry). Some scholars who have investigated this traditional system have discerned a correspondence with the modern system of education, with its successive tiers of elementary, secondary and higher education.¹

¹ See, for instance, Girma Amare, 'Aims and Purposes of Church Education in Ethiopia', *EjE* (1967): 1–3. Girma characterizes *nebab bêt* as elementary, *zéma bêt* as

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Žéma, *gené* and *tergicamé* (commentaries on the Scriptures and other holy tracts of religious or juridical character) were to constitute – in that ascending order – the three major tiers of the educational pyramid, the mastery of the essentials of reading and writing constituting the base. A distinctive feature of church education remained the premium placed on memorization and the veneration of authority. Such memorization reached absurd limits at the level of the *nebab bét*, where pupils recited the Acts of the Apostles and the Psalms of David in a language (Ge'ez) that they did not comprehend at all. In some ways, of all the forms of church education, it was *gené* that allowed the student to explore new avenues of self-expression.²

In spite of these limitations and although forced to concede to the expansion of modern education, especially in the towns, this educational system has remained in place up to the present time. Until recently, many young Ethiopians have had to go through the initial stages of that education (known conventionally as *yäqés temhert bét* or 'clerical education') before they transfer to the *engliz temhert bét* (the 'English school'). Over the centuries, many renowned centres of higher learning emerged. Understandably, the major centres of the Ethiopian state (Aksum, Lalibäla, Gondär) had attracted many of the more famous scholars. But other establishments of excellence had managed to evolve outside these political centres. Dima, Däbrä Wärq and Washära (all in Gojjam) are good examples of this. Girma Amare, with his penchant for comparisons with the Western system of education and scholarship, has this to say about the fame of some of these centres of learning:

Just as Paris in the Middle Ages was renowned for its theology, Bologna for its law, and Chartres for its literature, so in Ethiopia there are schools whose reputation in particular fields of study draws students from every corner of the Empire. Thus Zuramba in Begemder is noted for its Zemare and Mewast music, while Sekula in Waldeba (?) and Debre Abbai in Tigre are noted for Keddase music. Bethlehem in Begemder is the seat of learning for Deggwa. Anda Bet in Begemder is famous for its calligraphy.³

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the political centre moved southwards to the vicinity of modern Addis Ababa, the quest for royal patronage and the attendant fame and fortune attracted some of the finer scholars of northern Ethiopia. The St Mary and Raguél churches of

¹ (cont.) secondary, *gené* as college and *mätshaf bét* as university education. For a slightly different presentation, see Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'Non-Government Schools in Ethiopia', in M.L. Bender *et al.*, eds., *Language in Ethiopia* (1976): 339ff., where *žéma* is portrayed as the first stage of higher education.

² Ibid.: 347. The author also emphasizes the weight of memorization in the *nebab bét* and the *mätshaf bét*, writing in the first instance that 'We can realistically conclude that the nibab bet as a whole contributes little to the spiritual and mental development of the child' (p. 343) and that 'The habit of memorization and the uncritical acceptance of the commentary conditions the mode of thinking of the student' (p. 349).

³ Girma: 3–4.

Entotto, particularly the latter, drew a number of distinguished teachers, mostly from Gondär. The graduates of the Raguél school were to rise to prominent positions in the bureaucracy and the intellectual life of twentieth-century Ethiopia. They included a number of the characters of this study, notably Berhanu Denqé (a one-time Ethiopian ambassador to the United States who abandoned that post to emerge as one of the most embittered opponents of Emperor Haylä-Sellásé in the period after 1941), *Tsähañe Te'ezaz* Gäbrä-Sellásé (Menilek's chronicler), *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis (the powerful and wealthy de facto prime minister at the time of Iyyasu), *Blattén Géta* Heruy Wäldä-Sellásé, Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld (one of the most powerful ministers after 1941) and *Blatta* Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat.⁴

Islam provided another source of an indigenous educational system in Ethiopia. The religion first grew along coastal towns and the major trade routes linking the coast and the interior. It was along those routes that some of the major centres of Islamic learning emerged. Foremost among them was the walled city of Harär in eastern Ethiopia. There were other important centres in central Ethiopia, notably in Wällo.⁵ Islamic education shared with its Christian counterpart the same reliance on a classical language far removed from the daily medium of communication generally used by the students; in other words, Arabic was to Islamic education as Ge'ez was to the Christian. Again somewhat like the Christian system of education, the Islamic system had two levels: the *tehaji* (also known as the *majlis Quran* and the *sheikhy*), where pupils were made to learn the Arabic alphabet and recite the Quran, and the higher schools, where students engaged in the study of Islamic law and commentaries on the Quran.⁶ Finally, just like the Christian educational system, Islamic education thrived in interaction with centres of learning in the Middle East. The famous University of Al Azhar in Cairo was the destination of many Ethiopian Muslim students, especially from places like Harär and Wällo in north-central Ethiopia.

It is in this setting that Western education began to make itself felt in the first half of the nineteenth century. As in many parts of Africa, its introduction coincided with the arrival of missionaries, who saw the provision of educational facilities as the most effective way of winning over new converts. They thus set up schools and sent the more promising ones for studies in metropolitan institutions abroad. The Catholics (both Lazarist and Capuchin) and the Protestants (the CMS and the Swedish

⁴ For an invaluable study of the Raguél church, see Wudu Tafete, 'The Twin Churches of Raguel (1889-1985)', BA thesis (AAU, 1989), especially pp. 76-89, and, for some reminiscences by a former student, Berhanu Denqé, 'Qésar-na Abyot' ('Caesar and Revolution'), mimeographed manuscript (n.p., n.d.): 11-18. Berhanu claims (p. 12) that among the masters of the Raguél school was that legendary master of Amharic wit, *Aläqa* Gäbrä-Hanna.

⁵ See Hussein Ahmed, 'Traditional Muslim Education in Wällo', *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 3 (1988): 94-106. Hussein in fact implies (p. 98) that Wällo occupied a pre-eminent position in Islamic studies.

⁶ Haile Gabriel: 349-50.

evangelists) vied with each other in these endeavours. As a result, a number of Ethiopian youth made their way to European and occasionally Indian schools. Some later returned to assume important positions as interpreters, advisers and envoys. This missionary involvement in education continued, with some ups and downs, into the present century and is still part of the national educational life. It is worthy of note that two of the most successful schools in Addis Ababa, St Joseph and Nazareth, belong to this category.

It took a while after the introduction of missionary schools for the Ethiopian state to assume responsibility for the provision of modern education for its young citizens. Emperor Tēwodros set up what was an embryonic technical school at Gafat, near Dābrā Tabor in Bāgēmdēr. But this was very much connected with his obsession with the manufacture of firearms. Emperor Yohannes led too harried a life to contemplate more pacific pursuits. His successor, Menilek II, once he had confirmed at the Battle of Adwa his internal paramountcy and his international sovereign status, could turn his attention to introducing some of the amenities of modern civilization. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Ethiopia was already connected to the world through a postal and telegraphic system. A concession was given to his long-time foreign confidants, Alfred Ilg and Charles Chefneux, to construct a railway from the French colony of Djibouti to the Ethiopian capital, although it was not to be completed until 1917. The first decade of this century saw additional innovations, like a bank, a hospital and a school, the Menilek II School.

In 1906, as a sequel to the German mission led by Felix Rosen which had visited Ethiopia and concluded a treaty of commerce and friendship in 1905, a group of skilled German personnel arrived at the imperial court, including a tutor for Menilek's grandson, Iyyasu, and other young members of the imperial family. At about the same time, an Ethiopian who had returned to his country after spending the better part of his life in India and England, *Hakim Wārēnāh Eshātē* (alias Dr Charles Martin), was approaching both Menilek and the Coptic metropolitan *Abunä* Mattēwos to open up schools. Almost instinctively, he suggested that the staff could be brought from England.

It is possible, therefore, that the opening of the Menilek II School in 1908 might have been as much a defensive as an assertive measure on the part of the emperor and the *abun*, who remained for long the custodian of the school. As a kind of compromise between tradition and innovation, instruction was safely left to Coptic teachers who could be relied upon to impart to their pupils a tempered version of modern education. The school had a rather peripatetic life in its early years, beginning on land belonging to *Ras* Mikaél of Wällo in Seddest Kilo, then moving to the former house of Ilg located across the river from the imperial *gebbi*, until it finally settled on its present site in Arat Kilo in 1911. Nor were parents particularly eager to consign their offspring to the new institution. The founders' own caution notwithstanding, they were apprehensive of losing them to a new religion. This was probably what prompted Menilek's edict of compulsory education

for children above the age of six.⁷ However, students at this early stage were provided with pocket money of three thalers and meals from the palace.⁸

The school started with about 100 students of varying ages, mostly from the royalty and nobility. By 1924 the total number who had passed through the school is said to have reached about 3,000. The first batch included two future emperors (Iyyasu and Täfäri) and a number of future ministers and other dignitaries, including Emeru Haylä-Sellasé, Berru Wäldä-Gabriel, Mäkonnen Endalkachäw, the brothers Wäsäné and Näsibu Zamanuél, Getachäw Abatä, Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, Sahlé Tsädalu and Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl. The subjects taught included French, English, mathematics and drawing. Later, Amharic, Italian, Arabic, geography, history and sport were added to the syllabus. For many years, both teachers and headmaster were entirely Copt. Hanna Saleeb served in the latter capacity until after the death of his patron, *Abunä* Mattéwos, in 1926, after which he came under increasing pressure. He died in 1927, unhappy and deprived of his property. He was a victim of the wave of anti-Egyptian sentiment sweeping across the intelligentsia and the country at large in the mid-1920s, a feeling which the archbishop himself had come to share increasingly. Much of the resentment centred on the ecclesiastical domination the Coptic Church had exercised for centuries over the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.⁹

The Coptic establishment at Menilek II School applied some carrot (in the form of prizes at the end of the school year) and a liberal dosage of the stick, which provoked a spirited intervention by Menilek, urging patience and understanding. The Coptic passion for caning had apparently not spared even the young prince Iyyasu.¹⁰ The rules and regulations of the school proclaimed in 1929 strictly forbade teachers from punching, slapping or flogging their students, although imposing punitive physical exercises and caning of the palm was allowed. Instructors were also prohibited from ordering students to do household chores or errands for them or escorting them like servants.¹¹

In a way, the opening in 1925 of the second most important state school,

⁷ Fasil Teshome, 'The History of Menelik II School (1907–1962)', BA thesis (AAU, 1986): 8–14, 19–20. See also *Hakim* Wärgenäh Diary, copy at the Dept. of History of Addis Ababa University: 72, for his efforts to persuade the *abun* to support his initiatives for the expansion of education.

⁸ Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'Versuch einer Erziehungsreform in Äthiopien von 1896 bis 1936', PhD thesis (Free University of Berlin, 1971): 128. The pocket money was discontinued in 1932, when it was deemed no longer necessary. By then schools had in fact started turning back new applicants for lack of space: *ibid.*: 175.

⁹ Beletu Mengistu, 'A Short Biography of Abuna Matewos (1881–1926)', BA thesis (HSIU, 1972): 52ff.; Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 130.

¹⁰ Fassil: 15–20, App. V; FO 371/12346, Memo by A.L. Gardiner, English barrister, on Treatment of Hanna Saleb Bey and Badawi Moussa, 9.6.27; Bentinck to Tafari, 14.6.27; Emanuela Baronen Mattl-Löwenkreuz, ed., *Im Reiche Kaiser Meneliks. Tagebuch einer Abessinischen Reise von Friedrich Freiherrn von Kulmer* (1910): 165; *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 31.8.10; Adrien Zervos, *L'Empire d'Éthiopie* (1935): 224; Beletu: 39–43.

¹¹ Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Ṣekrā Nāgār* (1962EC): 608–12.

that of Täfäri Mäkonnen, had something to do with a widely felt need for an alternative to the Coptic-dominated Menilek II School. At the same time, it reflected Täfäri's penchant for rivalling, if not excelling, his illustrious predecessor. This tendency had been reflected also in the founding a year earlier of his paper *Berhanena Sälam* ('Light and Peace'), very much as Menilek had set up the first Amharic newspaper, *A'mero*. It is perhaps indicative of this sense of rivalry that the *abun*, as well as Empress Zäwditu, failed to attend the school's opening ceremony.¹² The school opened in late April with 32 pupils, grew to 81 by September and had reached 160 by the end of the year. Some of the students are reported to have come from Menilek II School, leaving the old establishment for the rising star.¹³

In spite of its novelty, the school shared some of the traits of its predecessor. A number of the students were clearly past the school age.¹⁴ In both schools, food for the students was provided by the palace kitchen.¹⁵ Some students came to school attended by their *ashkär* (servants), who carried their books and exercise books, and others came armed.¹⁶ Nor had public apprehension about sending their offspring to such alien institutions totally disappeared, in spite of nearly two decades of formal education. One of the first batch of students, Ato Emmanuel Abraham, reminisces that he got his chance to be sent with a contingent of students from Wälläga as a replacement for one of the candidates, whose mother panicked at the last minute at the prospect of sending her son to an alien world.¹⁷ When giving notice of the opening of the school, *Hakim* Wärqenäh, the superintendent or, to use his official Amharic title, *endärassé* (representative), had to go out of his way to underline the fact that students would not be exposed to any foreign religious education. He reassured parents that expatriate teachers had been given strict instructions 'to teach only language and mathematics', not religion. But, he went on reassuringly, Ethiopian teachers were at hand to give religious instruction in line with the Orthodox faith.¹⁸ Indeed it is clear from a copy of the contract English teachers were expected to sign that they were 'strictly prohibited from teaching and influencing the scholars of the school in any way as regards religion and politics adverse to the interest of Ethiopia'.¹⁹

From the outset, an effort was made to maintain a delicate balance between French and English. The appointment of Wärqenäh as super-

¹² FO 371/10875, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 5.8.25. In later years, though, Zäwditu did develop the habit of visiting the school and awarding prizes, as Dr Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé, a former student, testifies.

¹³ *Ibid.*, and FO 371/10875, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 3.12.25; Dr Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé; *Berhanena Sälam* (hereafter *BS*), 20.8.25.
¹⁴ *BS*, 9.4.25.

¹⁵ *Fasil*: 20; Dr Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé. See note 8.

¹⁶ Henri Rebeaud, *Chez le roi des rois d'Ethiopie* (n.d.): 138.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of My Life* (1995): 17.
¹⁸ *BS*, 9.4.25.

¹⁹ FO 371/13110, encl. in Dunbar to Chamberlain, 16.7.28.

intendent appears to have been designed to give an English counterbalance to the French direction of the school. The school regulations promulgated in 1926 were quite explicit about the precedence of the *endärassé* over the director in the affairs of the school.²⁰ Students were assigned to French and English streams, though it is not clear whether placements were made on the basis of the students' own choice or whether they were simply imposed on them. French nationals took care of the instruction in French, and English was initially taught by Ethiopian teachers, including *Ato* Efrém Tāwāldā-Mādhēn, who had studied in Beirut. Later, instructors were hired from England, although their experience was to be on the whole a rather unhappy one.²¹ As time went on, there developed a kind of division of labour between the two senior schools. Menilek II became exclusively English-orientated and thus served as a model for similar provincial establishments (particularly those set up in areas adjoining British colonies like the ones in Goré in western Ethiopia and Jijiga in the southeast). The French section of the school came to be attached to Tāfāri Mākonnen, which, with the Alliance Française, became a model for the French-orientated schools.²²

Even more than its predecessor, Tāfāri Mākonnen School enjoyed the close interest and attention of Tāfāri and his wife, Princess Mānān. The latter is reported to have supervised the preparation of the meals for the students and to have even watched them as they ate.²³ Another novel feature of the school was the patronage of provincial governors that it came to enjoy. A number of the students were supported by one or other of these governors. Thus, Emmanuel Abraham, who later rose to become a minister in Haylā-Sellāsē's government as well as leader of the Mākanā-Iyyāsus church in Ethiopia, was sponsored by *Dājjach* Habtā-Maryam Gābrā-Egziabhēr, the hereditary ruler of Wāllāga and a dedicated supporter of the school. Addis Alāmāyāhu, also later a minister as well as the author of arguably the most accomplished Amharic novel, *Feger Eskā Māqaber* ('Love until Death'), was sponsored by *Ras* Haylu of Gojjam. In addition, the school benefited from donations from local as well as foreign dignitaries in the form of gold and cattle, as well as cash.²⁴

This growing interest of provincial governors in Tāfāri Mākonnen school formed the prelude to the opening of a number of schools in the provinces, as well as further expansion in the capital itself. The last two years of the 1920s and the following five years before the Italian invasion witnessed a remarkable expansion of educational facilities. The inspirational role of Tāfāri and his school in this expansion seems all too evident. In July 1928,

²⁰ Mahtāmā-Sellāsē, *Ṣekrā Nāgār*: 612–16.

²¹ FO 371/10875, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 5.8.25; FO 371/14592, Ottaway to Devine, 6.11.29, Ottaway being one of the English teachers sent to Ethiopia; Barton to Henderson, 7.10.30; Dr Amanuēl Gābrā-Sellāsē.

²² Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 200–2.

²³ *Ibid.*: 171.

²⁴ For Emmanuel Abraham, one of the brightest students of the school, see his *Reminiscences*: 16–20; I had a chance also to interview him about his experiences. See Dr Amanuēl Gābrā-Sellāsē; *BS*, 7.7.27.

on the occasion of the closing of the school for the summer recess, Täfäri made a speech expressing his satisfaction that members of the nobility were following his example and opening schools in the provinces. Specifically, he pointed out the donation of land by his recently deceased mother-in-law, *Wäyzäro* Sehin, for the building of a school in Dessie; the laying by his wife, Mänän, of the foundation stone for a girls' school in the capital; and the preparations being made by *Däjjach* Berru Walda-Gabre'el to open a school in Sidamo.²⁵ This situation contrasts dramatically with what prevailed after the opening of Menilek II School. It is true that the establishment of that school was accompanied in the same year by the opening of a homonymous school in Harär.²⁶ But no other similar establishment followed thereafter.

The following towns and provinces came to have schools, all at the primary level only at this stage: Dessie and Goré (1928), Dire Dawa, Näqämté, Sidamo and Jijiga (1929), Asbä Täfäri (1931), Ambo, Goré and Jimma (1932), Gojjam and Gondär (1934) and Adwa and Mäqälé (1935).²⁷ The inspirational link mentioned above between Täfäri Mäkonnen School and these provincial establishments is demonstrated in an explicit fashion in a speech that *Däjjach* Habtä-Maryam of Wälläga made on the occasion of his visit to the school, in which he expressed his gratification that he was allowed to expend the money that he had brought in annual tribute towards the construction of a school. He vowed to do everything to help students, who, in search of education, had so far endured so much hardship.²⁸ In some of the schools, as in Sidamo, the students were literally kept in detention throughout the year for fear they would not come back if they were allowed a vacation.²⁹ One of the students in these early years was Mulugéta Buli, later to rise to prominence as major general and commander of the Imperial Bodyguard.

His nemesis (so to say), Mängestu Neway,³⁰ was a student at St George, one of the many schools that emerged in the capital about the same time. Opened in September 1929, the school was directed by a Swiss and by 1932

²⁵ *BS*, 12.7.28. See *BS*, 8.8.29, for a speech by the minister of interior, *Däjjach* Wäldä-Tsadeq, who also apparently doubled as guardian of the Menilek II School, praising Täfäri for urging the governors to open schools in their provinces.

²⁶ Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 196. Zervos (p. 230) rather anachronistically refers to the school in Harär as Ras Mäkonnen, which seems to have been founded only in 1930. The two schools were merged in 1933, most probably following a recommendation of the education minister, Sahlé Tsädalü: memo in old Ministry of Pen Archives (hereafter MPA), n.d.; see Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 196.

²⁷ Zervos: 230; *BS*, 2.1.30, 6.2.30, 29.10.31. For a list of government schools opened in the period 1908–35, with dates (which are sometimes at variance with the ones indicated here) and the language of instruction, see Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 196–7. The history of schools is one of the themes on which the Department of History of Addis Ababa University has been encouraging senior students to write their mandatory essay for graduation.

²⁸ *BS*, 28.2.29.

²⁹ *BS*, 21.4.32.

³⁰ He succeeded Mulugéta Buli as commander of the Imperial Bodyguard. With his brother, Gärmamé Neway, he led the abortive coup d'état of 1960, of which Mulugéta became one of the victims.

had come to have a student population of 317, of which 55 were girls.³¹ Another school, which unlike St George has continued up to the present time, was Haile Sellasie I School (now known as Kokäbä Tsebah), with a slant of its syllabus towards arts and handicrafts. Among its claim for national distinction in these early years is the fact that it contributed 42 of the cadets to the Gänät (Holäta) military school, which was opened in 1934.³²

But undoubtedly the most significant educational establishment in the capital after Täfäri Mäkonnen was the Etégé Mänän School for girls, opened in 1931. The issue of female education had been preoccupying progressive minds since the appearance of *Berhanena Sälam*. In 1926, a singular plea for female education was made by a certain Teblät Rädä, who contributed a modest 5 *berr* to that end. She had gone to Khartoum at the age of 12 and studied Arabic and acquired a smattering of English. She was particularly impressed by the number of Sudanese women working in offices, especially in the postal service and in banking.³³ In 1925 the indefatigable *Hakim* Wärqenäh was also contemplating, to the dismay of the *abun*, opening a small school for girls near his house. This did not materialize. Instead, he took with him to England five girls: a daughter each of Täfäri and Heruy and three of his own.³⁴ Täfäri took the trouble of writing to King George V, expressing the high esteem for British education which had prompted the move. He further revealed that he was sending his own daughter in order 'to set an example to the Noblemen of my country and to encourage others to do so and also to reap benefit therefrom myself'.³⁵ Wärqenäh for his part invested the measure with diplomatic significance, stating that 'English education of a large number of Abyssinian boys and girls will greatly help to bring about the much needed understanding between the two countries.'³⁶ Neither Buckingham Palace nor Downing Street was impressed by these declarations, the more so as they were being made while Wärqenäh was en route to the United States to negotiate a deal with an American company for the construction of a dam at Lake Tana, a perennial preoccupation of British foreign policy.³⁷

It was after such furtive beginnings that a school for girls named after the empress, *Etégé Mänän*, was opened in early 1931. An announcement to that effect in *Berhanena Sälam* underlined the philosophy behind the opening of the school, the conviction that the highest educational attainments by male students is of little consequence if their female partners were not also

³¹ BS, 28.7.32; Zervos: 225.

³² BS, 27.6.35; Zervos: 224.

³³ BS, 11.3.26.

³⁴ FO 371/10875, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 17.10.25; FO 371/10877, *idem.*, 13.7.25; FO 371/12352, Bentinck to FO, 29.7.27, 26.7.27, 1.8.27.

³⁵ FO 371/12352, Täfäri to George V, 24.7.27, trans. encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 1.8.27.

³⁶ FO 371/12352, Martin to Murray, 18.8.27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Bentinck to FO, 14.11.27; FO to Bentinck, 25.11.27; Lord Stamfordham to Leigh, 29.11.27.

educated.³⁸ The actual opening ceremony was held in September, when the empress made a speech expressing her joy at the fulfilment of her dream to open a female counterpart to the Täfäri Mäkonnen School. It was perhaps no accident that the directress of the new school was the wife of the director of the male school, for the pattern continued until at least 1935.³⁹ The school started with 50 students, mostly children of the nobility. Quite a few students used to come to school riding on mules and there was a special exit and entrance for daughters of royalty. In addition to strictly academic subjects, students were also instructed in handicrafts, painting and music. There was a school fee of 600 Maria Theresa thalers a year for full boarding students, compared with 90 thalers for Täfäri Mäkonnen School.⁴⁰

In addition to the schools mentioned above, opened by sovereigns or provincial magnates, there were a number of foreign community and mission schools, almost all located in the capital. As already indicated, mission-sponsored schools antedate government schools by more than half a century. The first such establishments go back to the 1840s, a time of resurgence of missionary activity in Ethiopia, when the Lazarists established a school at Alitiēna in northeastern Tegräy and the emissaries of the CMS set up a school in Shāwa. From the outset, Catholics and Protestants vied for pre-eminence in this regard. The Catholic missions, which were divided between the Lazarists and the Capuchins, generally tended to be francophone, although a couple or so of Italian missions (belonging to the Consolata School) later came to have establishments giving instruction in Italian. On the Protestant side, the Swedes, who set up their first school at Menkullu (on the mainland off Massawa), were the pioneers but were later superseded by the Americans, notably the Sudan Interior Mission. English remained the preferred medium of instruction in the Protestant mission schools, whether Swedish or American.⁴¹ Indeed, the Swedish Evangelical school, which had been opened in Addis Ababa in 1905 and had helped train such influential personalities as Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, came to be popularly known as the 'English school'.⁴²

Of the community schools, the Alliance Française schools, opened in both Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, were undoubtedly the most prominent. In addition, there were Greek and Armenian community schools. A school for Fālasha boys was also opened by a Zionist scholar and philanthropist, Jacques Faïtlovitch. There was also the Felwoha school for children of

³⁸ BS, 5.3.31.

³⁹ BS, 8.10.31; Zervos: 224.

⁴⁰ Senedu Gäbrä, *Yä'Etégé Mänän Temhert Bét Acher Tarik 1924–1949. The History of the Empress Menen School 1931–1956* (1956): 10–12; Zervos: 224; Dr Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé.

⁴¹ Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 180–1, gives a useful table of the mission schools, with years of establishment and the media of instruction. See Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundations of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia', *Ethiopia Observer* (1962): 254–5.

⁴² Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 110.

manumitted slaves, opened by *Hakim Wärgenäh*.⁴³ But undoubtedly the most important foreign-sponsored school was the Alliance Française school in Addis Ababa. Quite a few of the intelligentsia discussed in this work had their early education there. The school started its activity with the blessing of Menilek, who was happy to see the French teach their language and other academic subjects as long as they refrained from giving religious instruction.⁴⁴ By 1911, the student population had come to number 72. By 1935 the number had risen to 450.⁴⁵ From the correspondence between the French legation and the foreign ministry in Paris, it is apparent that the school suffered from shortage of resources. Fees were collected only from expatriate students. Otherwise, the school, which had two separate units for boys and girls, subsisted on subventions from the railway company and French government subsidies channelled through the legation.⁴⁶ As already indicated, an Alliance Française school existed also in Dire Dawa, with a student enrolment of about 120 by 1929. There were in addition Italian and American community schools.⁴⁷

The French expressed concern at the competition they came to face increasingly from the non-French, and mostly Protestant, schools.⁴⁸ In the early 1920s the Capuchin mission discerned a movement to disestablish French as the dominant foreign language, pointing an accusing finger at *Ato Fasika Habtä-Mikaél*, a former student of Menilek II School.⁴⁹ The appointment of the American Presbyterian Ernest Work as educational adviser, coupled with the long-standing efforts of *Hakim Wärgenäh* to promote the English language at the expense of French, increased the sense of alarm.⁵⁰ This came out very clearly in a long and interesting report written towards the end of 1930 by the French minister and entitled 'Lutte de la langue anglaise contre la langue française'. The minister concluded his report rather despondently thus:

⁴³ Another useful table of these schools, with dates of establishment, number of students and staff, as well as subjects taught, is to be found in AA/R77868, encl. in Weiss to AA, 5.12.26. See Zervos: 225.

⁴⁴ MAE, NS 20, Menilek to Klobukowsky, 20.6.00/28.2.08, Fr. trans. Among students of the school who later had national impact were the historian Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya, Mammo Taddäsä, minister in Häyla-Sellase's government in the post-1941 period, Täsfayé Tägäñ, a close aide of the emperor in the 1930s, and Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, the most powerful politician under Haylä-Sellase in 1941–55; oral information from *Ato Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya* and *Ato Avedis Terzian*.

⁴⁵ Zervos: 440.

⁴⁶ MAE, NS 20, Rapport par le directeur titulaire, J. Colasseau, 1.7.11; Brice to De Selver, 3.7.11; GUERRE 1914–1918/1636, Brice to Doumergue, 21.4.14; Brice to Declasse, 13.5.15.

⁴⁷ Zervos: 441; MAE K/145, Reffye to Briand, 17.4.30.

⁴⁸ See for example MAE K/145, Reffye to Briand, 17.4.30; Chargé d'affaires (French legation) to MAE, 19.9.31.

⁴⁹ Aleme Eshete, 'The Pre-War Attempts to Promote the Use of the English Language in the Educational System of Ethiopia in place of French', *EJE* (1974): 71.

⁵⁰ The fact that *Hakim Wärgenäh* brought eighteen Indian teachers, doctors and technicians in 1930 (see Aleme, 'Pre-War Attempts': 83) must have increased French apprehensions, although not much is known as to what use the anglophone Indians were put to.

je suis assez pessimiste sur la possibilité non seulement d'étendre la langue française en Ethiopie, mais même de maintenir notre situation prépondérante actuelle, battue en brèche de tous côtés. Je ne puis compter que sur certains abyssin eux-mêmes, sur l'Empereur favorable au Français, mais indécis et hypnotisé par les formes extérieures de la civilisation anglaise, sur nos compatriotes laïques d'Addis Abeba s'appuyant sur les Frères de St. Gabriel admirables de dévouement, mais pauvres de moyens, sur M. GARICOIX⁵¹ qui lutte pour maintenir le français dans l'enseignement supérieur et sur quatre Libanais récemment engagés pour une école professionnelle du gouvernement et qui emploient tout leur zèle à se faire de bons propagandistes de l'enseignement de notre langue.⁵²

A note from the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry) expressed similar concern at the decline of French influence, attributing it to the death or removal from influential posts of prominent francophone Ethiopians or friends of France.⁵³

These were indeed indications of a growing trend that was to become so much more palpable after 1941. But before 1935 the pre-eminence of the French language was all too evident, the more so as most of the government-sponsored schools gave it precedence. This was particularly the case with the two principal ones, Täfäri Makonnen and Empress Mānān.⁵⁴ French had come to be the *lingua franca* of the prewar intelligentsia as of the enlightened nobility. The British were acutely aware of this fact, seeing French paramountcy not only in the educational system within the country but also in the destination of most of the Ethiopians who went abroad for further education.⁵⁵

As remarkable, if not as consequential, as the state- and foreign-sponsored schools were the individual efforts to expand educational facilities. We have already noted *Hakim Wārqenāh's* endeavours in this direction.⁵⁶ But his efforts paled in comparison with the prolonged, if in the end equally futile, campaign of *Fitawrari Dērēssa Amāntē* to build a public school through public contributions. Issues of the first two years of *Berhanena Sālam* rarely failed to carry some notice or other related to that campaign. As he launched the campaign, Dērēssa was contemplating the movement snowballing into a sustained endeavour that would not stop before the opening of a college or a university. Initial responses were encouraging, the Empress Zāwditu setting a fine example by contributing 1,000 berr. Contributors often added their own exhortations for the noble cause as they declared their financial donations.⁵⁷ Donations were made in cash as well as in kind:

⁵¹ Director of the Täfäri Makonnen School.

⁵² MAE K/145, Reffye to MAE, 17.12.30.

⁵³ MAE K/139, MAE note, 14.12.35.

⁵⁴ MAE K/145, extract from report of Contre-Amiral Commandant La Division Navale du Levant, 31.3.33, for a complacent assessment. The only regret, the observer added, was that the girls married too young and were thus forced to discontinue their studies.

⁵⁵ FO 371/16996, Annual Report for 1932, encl. in Barton to Simon, 12.1.33.

⁵⁶ See pp. 23 and 28 above.

⁵⁷ BS, 25.6.25.

Däjjach Berru of Sidamo, for instance, contributed 15 *wäqét* of gold ‘for a start’.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, by mid-1926, more than a year after the campaign was launched, the sum collected amounted to a paltry 6,705 berr, the 15 *wäqét* of gold contributed by *Däjjach* Berru and an additional 5 *yämeser wärq* (probably gold dust, as opposed to nuggets).⁵⁹ One contributor attributed the poor result, rather unconvincingly, to the lack of interest among the nobility, who were quite content with their wealth, and the already educated, who did not see the justice of the whole undertaking since they themselves had to acquire their education without public support.⁶⁰ By early 1927 Déréssa himself had to confess failure in his enterprise. He realized that, even if successful, his efforts would have managed to give educational opportunities to only 200–300 students and would thus have represented a mere drop in the ocean. Instead, he came round to proposing the institution of an education tax as the better alternative.⁶¹ This idea came to have considerable support among other contributors too.⁶² But its realization had to wait until after 1941.

In spite of the not negligible expansion of schools described above, a feeling of clear inadequacy pervaded Ethiopian education at this early stage, as indeed was to remain the case for many decades thereafter. Both Déréssa and Märs’é-Hazän Wäldä-Qirqos, the Amharic teacher at Täfäri Mäkonnen School, adduced some impressive statistical data to drive home the backward state of Ethiopian education. Déréssa, who like most of his contemporaries was fascinated by the Japanese miracle of modernization, contrasted his country’s state of education with that of Japan and ruefully concluded that the total number of Ethiopian *university graduates* was much lower than that of *universities* in Japan.⁶³ Märs’é Hazän did not have to go to the Far East to underline his country’s backwardness. The record of countries like Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda, which were under European colonial rule, he argued, was much more impressive than that of independent Ethiopia. Even Mauritius, which was only a dot on the map, had 57 government and 93 private schools, he concluded.⁶⁴

It was not only the extent but also the quality of education that was a subject of concern. A lady contributor to *Berhanena Sälam* gave one of the most incisive indictments of the prevalent educational system. Arguing that the education provided in the schools was equivalent to that offered for children aged between seven and ten in European schools, she concluded:

እስከ አሁንም በተማሪ ቤቶች ሰም የቆሙቱ ትምህርት ቤቶች እውነተኛ የዕውቀት ቤቶች

አለመሆናቸው ትምህርቱን አለመስከሮ አንድ ተማሪ ሊወጣቸው ባልተቻለበት ነው። ...

⁵⁸ BS, 10.6.26.

⁵⁹ BS, 17.6.26.

⁶⁰ BS, 15.4.26.

⁶¹ BS, 24.2.27, 22.3.28.

⁶² See, for instance, BS, 26.4.28, 17.1.29.

⁶³ BS, 27.10.27.

⁶⁴ BS, 2.12.26.

በሰዚህ በነዚህ ትምህርት ቤቶች የህፃናት ትምህርት ተምረው ጥቂት የውጭ አገር ቋንቋ

ያውቁ አንድ ዋና አዋቂ መምሰልና ግስመሰላቸውም አጅግ ያሳዝናል።

That the schools so far opened are not houses of knowledge can be seen from the fact that they have not produced any graduates. It is thus sad that those who acquire children's education and a smattering of a foreign language in these schools parade as scholars.⁶⁵

She emphasized in particular the need to break the dependency on foreign teachers by training Ethiopians, both male and female. The absence of any programme imparting specialized skills to students or preparing them for a special career was pointed out by another observer. Students thus tended to leave school for the ever-ready occupations of interpreter and clerk after learning to read and write and acquiring a smattering of French.⁶⁶ The drop-out rate was very high. As one observer explained, the children of the nobility preferred to obtain the social advancement they wanted through *däjj tenat* (regular court attendance) than through the drudgery of learning. Children of the poorer sections of society discontinued their education because their parents wanted them to help the family earn its living rather than spend time in dubious pursuits of a future livelihood.⁶⁷

Moreover, at this stage, education was confined to the primary level. The idea of opening secondary schools and colleges was at a tentative stage.⁶⁸ Until 1930, when the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts was formally established, there was no government department charged with giving the educational process central direction. When Menilek designated ministers in 1907, he had education subsumed under the Ministry of Religion and thereby entrusted its supervision to the safe custody of the *abun*. The appointment by Menilek's successor, *Ləj Iyyasu*, of a minister of education remained of only nominal significance. The schools that came to be established in this period thus tended to have an autonomous existence.⁶⁹ There was no standard policy on such matters as curricula, textbooks and medium of instruction.

These were some of the points raised in a plan envisaged by the government's educational adviser, the American Ernest Work.⁷⁰ The thrust of his recommendations was in the direction of developing a self-sufficient and

⁶⁵ BS, 22.7.26. The author, Abbäbäch 'Waykaman', might well have been the daughter of Wakeman, the medical officer of the British legation.

⁶⁶ AA/R77868, Weiss to AA, 5.12.26. The German minister was writing in the context of his own efforts to build 'einer guten deutschen Schule' ('a good German school'). A Deutsch-Abessinische Shulverein had been founded for that purpose on 29 September 1926. But a German school did not see the light of day until well into the middle of the century.

⁶⁷ BS, 19.8.27. Rebeaud, once director of the Täfäri Mäkonnen School, gives portraits of drop-outs, including that of Kābbādā Burayu, who was enticed away by the fascinating world of auto-mechanics: pp. 146 ff.

⁶⁸ FO 371/16996, Annual Report for 1932, encl. in Barton to Simon, 12.1.33.

⁶⁹ Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 216-17.

⁷⁰ A condensed version of this plan was published under the title 'A Plan for Ethiopia's Education System', *Journal of Negro Education* (1934): 66-8. Richard Caulk discussed

authentic educational system. To this end he proposed that the system to be adopted should be not English, French, Italian or American, but Ethiopian. The Ethiopianization of curricula and textbooks was thus a central theme of his plan. An important ingredient of such a national system of education was the use of Amharic as the medium of instruction, if need be by setting up a language academy to attune the national language to modern needs and requirements. To make the country self-sufficient in teaching staff, a teacher training school should be set up, preferably as part of a University of Ethiopia. Finally, he proposed the institution of a three-tier system of education, consisting of six years of elementary education, another five or six years of vocational or business education, and a period of university training. Elementary schools were to be the main priority of the government because of the basic education they provide to the majority of the population. Moreover, the education offered at that level, and in which village teachers were to have an important role, should have a practical bent. 'Education for everyday life' was Work's motto.

Of all his recommendations, it appears it was the idea of opening a university that triggered a ready response from the government. In a letter of 26 July 1932, the foreign minister *Blattén Géta* Heruy Wäldä-Sellásé expressed his sense of gratification at the idea and conveyed the emperor's consent to go ahead with the plan. The institution, which was to be an American enterprise at the initial stage, was to be named (rather prophetically) Haylä-Sellásé I University. The emperor pledged to give the necessary land and material for the construction of the building and a further donation of 100,000 berr to help cover the expenses.⁷¹ But such lofty ideas remained in the realm of contemplation rather than execution. Even secondary education, let alone college and university education, was to be a phenomenon only of the period after 1941.

⁷⁰ (cont.) a more elaborate version submitted to the emperor in 1931 in his 'Ernest Work on Ethiopian Education', *EjE* (1975): 3–14.

⁷¹ Appendix in Caulk, 'Ernest Work': 13, with English translation on p. 14.

Three



The First Generation

The distinction between the pioneers discussed in the first chapter and what I have designated as the first-generation intellectuals in this study looks rather blurred at first sight. Many of these first-generation intellectuals share with the pioneers one or other of the following features: their connection with missionaries, the fortuitous nature of their training or their strongly traditional base. But they differ in two important respects. First, the pioneers almost all antedate the reign of Menilek and the first-generation intellectuals belong to the Menilek or post-Menilek era. Secondly, and more significantly, few of the pioneers rose to a higher status than interpreter/translator, whereas some at least of the first-generation intellectuals were to attain ministerial positions.

The distinction between the first and second generations of intellectuals is much more clear. In some cases – as in that of *Hakim Wärqenäh Eshäté* and *Blattén Géta Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé* on the one hand, and their sons *Benyam* and *Yoséf Wärqenäh* and *Fäqadä-Sellasé* and *Sirak Heruy* on the other – the term generation has a literal application; the first were fathers and the second their sons. Although in the 1930s some members of both generations came to share government posts, this was largely because members of the first generation attained those posts rather late in their careers. What clearly distinguishes the two generations is the period of their respective formations. The first generation largely received their educations during the reign of Menilek, abroad or in Ethiopia, and the second did so in the reign of and often under the patronage of *Täfäri-Haylä-Sellasé*, in the 1920s and 1930s. Sadly enough, it is also mostly members of the second generation who perished during the Italian occupation, thereby depriving the country of their better education and greater zeal for reform.

The first generation itself exhibits considerable diversity in terms of its formative experience, however. It can broadly be divided into four groups. There were, to begin with, what one may call the children of fortune by

reason of the fortuitous circumstances under which they acquired their education abroad. To these group belong *Hakim* Wärqenäh Eshäté, *Käntiba* Gäbru Dästa, Onésimos Näsib and *Näggadras* Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ. The second group could be described as the protégés of Emperor Menilek and *Ras* Mäkonnen and it includes *Näggadras* Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus and *Bäjerond* Täklä-Hawaryat Täklä-Maryam, respectively.

The third, and perhaps the largest, group is composed of the self-educated: *Aläqa* Atsmä-Giyorgis, *Blatta* Gäbrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam, *Aläqa* Tayyā Gäbrä-Maryam, *Blattén Géta* Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé and *Blatta* Déréssa Amänté. Most of the intellectuals belonging to this group started with a sound grounding in traditional education and then added a modern veneer to it through exposure to some degree of Western education abroad or inside the country. One could add to this group what have come to be known as the graduates of Raguél, the famous centre of traditional education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries located in the Entotto hills to the north of Addis Ababa. Besides Heruy, they include Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld, *Blatta* Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat and *Blattén Géta* Mars'e Hazan Wäldä-Qirqos. Finally, the fourth group consists of the graduates of the first modern school established by the Ethiopian state, the Menilek II School. These included *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädalü, the brothers *Käntibas* Wäsäné and Näsibu Zamanuél and *Ras Bitwäddäd* Mäkonnen Endalkachäw.

The children of fortune

Hakim Wärqenäh Eshäté

Perhaps the most interesting, though not the most prolific, of the first generation of intellectuals is *Hakim* Wärqenäh Eshäté, known to foreigners by his adopted name, Dr Charles Martin. He was born on 21 October 1864 in the city of Gondär. His father, *Näggadras* Eshäté Wäldä-Maryam, was forced to accompany Emperor Téwodros to his retreat in Maqdala in the final days of his reign. Eshäté took along his wife, *Wäyzäro* Dästa ZäWäldä-Maryam, and his baby son. In the confusion that reigned following the storming of Maqdala on 13 April 1868, Wärqenäh lost both his parents and was found by the British troops with the son of Téwodros, Alämayähu, weeping by the corpse of the emperor. A Colonel C. Chamberlain took charge of the three-and-half-year-old Wärqenäh but later transferred him to the custody of another colonel, Charles Martin, in Aden; hence Wärqenäh's adopted name.¹

Wärqenäh then found himself in India, whence the expeditionary force

¹ Family biography of Wärqenäh. Wärqenäh himself writes in his book on world geography, *Yä-Aläm Ji'ografti Bä'Amareñña* (1920EC): ix, that he was taken out of Ethiopia at the age of three. I have relied mainly on the family biography to draw this outline of his life, filling in the details from other sources.

sent against Emperor Téwodros had originated. He attended mission school at Rawalpindi and Armistar before he joined the Lahore Medical College in 1877. After his graduation in 1882, he did two years of practice as an assistant surgeon. He then travelled to Scotland for his specialization and received certificates in medicine and surgery. On completion of his studies, he was appointed medical officer and surgeon in Burma in December 1891.²

He made his first visit back to Ethiopia in 1899.³ Probably because of the culture shock that he must have gone through, his diary gives a distinctly chilly impression of his return to the motherland and reunion with his relatives. He viewed the exuberance and excitement of his kin with clinical detachment, expressing scepticism about the identities of his maternal grandmother, *Emahoy* Salamnesh, his aunt and his half-sister, who had all come from Gondär for the occasion, and about the scar on his shin (which he says was not apparent) by which they established his own identity. His aloofness was apparently confined to his diary or did not perturb his relatives, who were even earnestly trying to find a bride for him.⁴

His encounter with Emperor Menilek was also not without interest. After his first audience, Wärgenäh gives us the kind of description of the emperor which one often encounters in foreign travellers' accounts: 'He [i.e. Menilek] has large expressive, rather blood shot eyes, largish mouth, thickish lips white good teeth very curly moustachios & beard. Altho not a handsome man he has a very pleasant & intelligent face & a frank open brow.'⁵

But a strain soon crept into the relations between the emperor and Wärgenäh. Apparently eager to use his skills, Menilek asked Wärgenäh to remain in Ethiopia. But the two could not agree over the salary. Wärgenäh asked for 5,000 thalers a year. Menilek was not ready to offer more than 2,000, and rebuked him for his lack of patriotism. Wärgenäh relented and agreed to stay for one year provided that the emperor arranged with the British for his secondment during that period and agreed to a salary of 2,000 thalers plus provisions.⁶ On these terms, Wärgenäh stayed on for about a year. But the adjustment that he had hoped for did not materialize at the end of that term and, to the intense fury of Empress Taytu, he refused to make his services available any longer and left Addis Ababa on 9 March 1901.⁷

² Sileshi Semaw, 'Hakim Worqineh (Dr Charles Martin). Ethiopia's First Doctor', BA thesis (AAU, 1982): 1–2; family biography.

³ According to Wärgenäh 1920EC: ix and the family biography, both of which give the date 1891EC (i.e. 1898/9). In his diary Wärgenäh writes that he had his first audience with Emperor Menilek on 5 January 1900 (?) (p. 43) and met his relatives in the last days of March (p. 58); both events suggest that Wärgenäh must have arrived towards the end of 1899.

⁴ Wärgenäh Diary: 58–9, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 44. The words and abbreviations (here and in subsequent passages) are reproduced exactly as they appear in the original.

⁶ Wärgenäh Diary: 48–51, 59–60. British archival documents give the dates 11 April 1900–9 May 1901 for Wärgenäh's first period of secondment and from 10 August till 14 April 1902 for his second: FO 371/2, India Office to Colonial Office, 6.2.06; see also FO 371/2, India Office to Foreign Office, 2.8.00.

⁷ Wärgenäh Diary: 84–9, 131.

His relationship with *Ras* Mäkonnen, governor of Harär, was more amicable. The business-minded governor suggested a joint venture in a rubber plantation whereby he would raise the necessary capital of £10,000–15,000 and Wärqenäh presumably would provide the managerial skill. This does not seem to have got off the ground. More concretely, Mäkonnen granted Wärqenäh what appears to have been a *gult* over church land in Jarso. It was also during his stay in Harär that Wärqenäh accompanied as a medical officer the Anglo-Ethiopian expeditionary force against the Somali patriotic resistance leader, Muhammad Abdille Hasan, in 1901. After his return from the Ogaden, where the operations took place, Wärqenäh met *Blatta* Gäbrä-Egziabhér Gila-Maryam, another character of our study. Wärqenäh finally left Ethiopia on 2 February 1902, apparently much regretted by Mäkonnen, who, according to Wärqenäh's testimony, had 'asserted that he was very fond of me & loved me & did not wish to part fr me but that he was afraid to do much for me as it was likely to bring him into trouble with the King'.⁸

Wärqenäh returned to Ethiopia towards the end of 1908, as a replacement to the British legation medical officer, Dr Wakemann. He was apparently so eager to revisit his country that he agreed to the annual salary of £286 that the Foreign Office was prepared to pay him, although he had initially asked for £680.⁹ He found the old emperor ailing and being attended to by competing foreign doctors who reflected the rival interests of their legations. Following the dismissal of the German physician, Dr Zintgraff, who had been at the centre of a controversy over his allegations that certain palace officials had tried to poison the ailing emperor,¹⁰ Wärqenäh was assigned to attend to Menilek at the emperor's request in August 1909, and he was to remain in his service until at least 1912, a year before his death in December 1913.¹¹

Wärqenäh left for Burma in 1913 or soon after. According to an informant, his departure was triggered by disagreement with Empress Taytu on the mild and moderate diet that he had recommended to the ailing emperor.¹² He was accompanied by his wife, *Wäyzäro* Qätsäla Tulu, and one of his two sons, Yoséf. Wärqenäh's marriage to Qätsäla in 1910/11 was probably the most important event of his second visit to Ethiopia. She

⁸ Wärqenäh Diary: pp. 261, 156–9, 163, 259, 276; family biography.

⁹ FO 371/193, Gleichen to Maxwell, 25.10.07; FO 371/395, Martin to FO, 30.5.08; Langley to Martin, 18.6.08; Martin to Langley, 19.6.08; Martin to Langley, 21.9.08.

¹⁰ See Bairu Tafla, *Ethiopia and Germany. Cultural, Political and Economic Relations, 1871–1936* (1981): 115–27, for details of this controversy; FO 371/595, British Legation to FO, tel., 23.7.09.

¹¹ FO 371/595, Hervey to Grey, 2.9.09; FO 371/823, Langley to Thesiger, 19.8.10; FO 371/1294, India Office (IO) to FO, 23.5.12; *Aläqa* Tayyā Papers, Gäbrä-Egziabhér to Tayyā, 8.4.01/17.12.08.

¹² Avedis Terzian. He does not give the date of Wärqenäh's departure, but the family biography has the year 1905EC (i.e. 1912/13) and the family obituary of his wife, *Wäyzäro* Qätsäla, gives the year 1915. In any case Wärqenäh could not have left before 13 July 1913, the date of birth of his second son, Benyam, who we are told in Qätsäla's obituary was left behind in Ethiopia with Qätsäla's mother.

was the daughter of a Shāwan *fitawrari* (thus dashing the hopes for a Gondāre match that his relatives had strived to arrange during his first visit) and an attendant on *Wäyzäro* Zäwditu Menilek, the future empress. Her father had demurred about giving his daughter to a *färänj* (foreigner), as Wārqnäh was for all intents and purposes presumed to be, but he was finally prevailed upon by her mother. Until a shadow came to be cast over their marriage in the 1930s, Wārqnäh and Qätsäla had a happy and mutually rewarding marriage. She took advantage of her stay in Burma to study nursing; she also taught her husband Amharic and Oromo.¹³ She returned with a broadened outlook and a dedication to service that was to mark her as one of the most modern and distinguished women of her age. Their marriage was also productive in children: they came to have six sons and seven daughters; Wārqnäh already had a son, appropriately named Tēwodros in view of the circumstances of his father's discovery, from a British wife he had married while studying in Scotland.¹⁴

Sometime around 1920, Wārqnäh returned to Ethiopia for the third time and he was to remain in Ethiopia until his posting to London as Ethiopian minister. This was the period of his most active involvement in Ethiopian affairs, when he occupied a number of important posts and also joined in the general intellectual excitement of the 1920s. His first post was that of medical director of Menilek II Hospital. A year later, he was put in charge of the administration of the hot springs (Fel Weha) in the capital. In 1925, with the opening of the Täfäri Mäkonnen School, he was appointed to the post of superintendent, from which he was to exert considerable influence on national life. It was also while superintendent that he wrote his major book, a world geography text in Amharic (1920EC). The emancipation of slaves following the 1924 decree opened new channels for his inexhaustible energy. Having championed the cause of abolition for a long time, he now set up an association known as the Love and Service Society to deal with the growing problem of the rehabilitation of the children of the manumitted slaves.¹⁵

In 1927, Wārqnäh became a subject of international news when he led an official delegation to negotiate with a New York company, J.G. White Engineering, for the construction of a dam on Lake Tana. This was part

¹³ Family obituary of *Wäyzäro* Qätsäla.

¹⁴ Of Wārqnäh's sons, Benyam and Yoséf, as we shall see below, were to make history as members of the Black Lion resistance group. Yohannes followed his father's profession and became a distinguished gynaecologist at the Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa. Elizabeth was married successively to Tedla Haile, one of the second-generation intellectuals discussed below, and Yelma Déréssa, Haylä-Sellasé's British-educated minister of finance in the post-1941 era. Sosena was married to Mäkurya Wäldä-Sellasé, who was educated in Italy, and Rebecca was married to Gétahun Täsämma, minister of community development under Haylä-Sellasé. Sara published an abridged Amharic adaptation of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, in 1941. Of the above, I was able to interview *Wäyzäros* Elizabeth and Sosena and *Ato* Mäkurya Wäldä-Sellasé through the good offices of Eleni Mäkurya, grand-daughter of Wārqnäh and daughter of *Wäyzäro* Sosena and *Ato* Mäkurya.

¹⁵ Family biography; *BS*, 27.5.26

of Täfäri's response to the Anglo-Italian understanding of 1925, whereby the British had agreed to let the Italians exercise exclusive economic influence in western Ethiopia in return for diplomatic support to help the British realize their decades-long foreign-policy objective in Ethiopia, the acquisition of a concession from the Ethiopian government to build a dam on Lake Tana in order to regulate the flow of the waters of the Blue Nile to the Sudan and Egypt. Täfäri wanted to assert his country's independence by building the dam himself with the help of an American company. Wärgenäh's stay in the United States, which is said to have lasted eight weeks, was significant not only for his meeting with officials of the American company and of the US government, including President Coolidge, but also for his visit to Harlem, where he conveyed Täfäri's greetings to the African-American community and his readiness to welcome skilled African-Americans to Ethiopia.¹⁶

On 1 July 1928 Wärgenäh was given the traditional Ethiopian title of *azazh*¹⁷ and appointed president of the Special Court, established to adjudicate cases involving expatriates and nationals.¹⁸ In 1930, he set a pattern that was to be much more evident in Ethiopia after 1941 by going to India and recruiting 16 professionals, two of them teachers.¹⁹ In the same year he was appointed governor of the southeastern province of *Chärchär*. In Ethiopian politics, provincial appointments have generally been expressions of imperial disfavour. In this particular case, Wärgenäh's assignment has been attributed to the machinations of his rivals in court, foremost of whom was Heruy.²⁰ This might very well have been the case. But, given the fact that *Chärchär* was one of the regions that Täfäri had picked to develop as a model of modern provincial administration, his designation of Wärgenäh to its governorship might well have been dictated by considerations of his qualifications rather than by court politics.²¹

We do not know much about the nature of Wärgenäh's administration in *Chärchär*, which lasted some four years. A *Berhanena Sälam* article compliments him for opening a school, and building roads inside the main

¹⁶ US 884.6461/24, memo of State Dept.; FO 371/12342, extract from *Daily Express*, 4.11.27; FO 371/12343, extract from *New York World*, 20.11.27. For British reactions, see FO 371/12342, FO minutes, 4.11.27, where Wärgenäh is spitefully described as 'a man of dubious nationality, who was picked up as a baby by an English colonel on the battlefield of Magdala'; FO 371/12343, FO minutes, 11.11.27; Bentinck to FO, tel., 12.11.27; enclosure in Rey to Murray, 10.12.27, where the traveller and businessman C.F. Rey, who was much more knowledgeable about Ethiopian affairs than the bigoted Foreign Office officials, transmits a note on his interview with Wärgenäh and puts the whole thing in perspective.

¹⁷ Literally meaning 'commander', it was a title given to the chief of the imperial court. In this sense, it does not seem to have had much relevance to the functions that Wärgenäh was expected to perform.

¹⁸ Family biography.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; FO 371/14598, Troutbeck to Henderson, 8.5.30; Barton to Henderson, 15.10.30.

²⁰ US 884.01/27, Southard to Sec. of State, 8.12.30.

²¹ Wärgenäh styled himself 'Yä-*Chärchär* Awraja Abägaz', as we can see from a letter he wrote to Père André Jarosseau, the Catholic archbishop of Harär: Capuchin Archives (IES Collection), 2R 209, Wärgenäh to Abba Endryas, 5.13.24/10.9.32.

town, Asäbä Täfäri, and to the neighbouring province of Arsi.²² He was assisted in running the school by one of his former students at Täfäri Mäkonnen School, Emmanuel Abraham, who was the headmaster and has vivid memories of the epic struggle waged to make the school a viable proposition.²³ Reflecting back on his experience, he says:

There was nothing in my long years (42) of service that gave me more pleasure than my work at the Asbe Täfäri School. To observe the young people grow in mind as well as in body was sheer delight. My main purpose was to pass on to them all the knowledge I had gained at Täfäri Makonnen School and then let them go wherever they could obtain higher education. As this was also the intention of my fellow-teachers, they shared their knowledge with their students without stint.²⁴

In 1934, in the wake of the Wälwäl incident which triggered the Italo-Ethiopian conflict,²⁵ Wärgenäh was assigned to a post for which he was eminently qualified: Ethiopian minister to London. Supported by the great campaigner for the Ethiopian cause, Sylvia Pankhurst, and her weekly, *New Times and Ethiopia News (NTEEN)*, to which Wärgenäh contributed regularly, he engaged in an unrelenting struggle against the pro-Italian British authorities and was able to build a powerful movement of solidarity for Ethiopia. In his articles he campaigned to raise funds for Ethiopian refugees and for the patriots continuing the resistance inside the country, fought against the steps being taken in the League to legitimize the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, and exposed the hypocrisy of the officially neutral stance of the British government.²⁶ In a letter to the British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, he expressed his dismay at his policy in the following words:

I should be much obliged if you would be so good as to let me know the reason for your taking the trouble repeatedly & unasked to make the statements which, to say the least, is doubtful and is certainly detrimental to the already ill-used Ethiopia. For a giant to go out of his way to kick a wounded pigmy, does not appear to me to be the kind of treatment which you or the British People would like to indulge in.²⁷

Complications soon arose, however, in Wärgenäh's relations with the emperor, who had joined him in exile after the defeat of the Ethiopian forces in 1936. Partly these arose from the exception that the emperor,

²² BS, 17.7.33.

²³ Oral communication, Ato Emmanuel Abraham, who was to follow Wärgenäh as his secretary when he was appointed Ethiopian minister to London in 1934; after 1941, Emmanuel came to hold various ministerial portfolios after a long spell in diplomatic postings abroad. Since the interview he offered me, Ato Emmanuel has published his memoirs as *Reminiscences of My Life* (1995), and the relevant pages here are pp. 25–8. A copy of Haylä-Sellasé's letterbook at the National Library in Addis Ababa, being in the nature of mostly directives from the palace to Wärgenäh, gives us little insight into the initiatives taken by the governor himself, although the documents are of some value for the study of land issues in the region.

²⁴ Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences* (1995): 27.

²⁵ Ato Emmanuel Abraham; family biography.

²⁶ NTEEN, 23.5.36, 20.6.36, 25.7.36, 17.10.36.

²⁷ FO 371/20209, Martin (Wärgenäh) to Eden, 2.11.36.

under pressure from the British, took to the strident campaign that his minister was waging against the British.²⁸ Partly, it had its origin in disagreement over finances.²⁹ Developments inside Ethiopia also took a turn of great personal tragedy for Wärgenäh. Following the attempt on the life of Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian viceroy, Wärgenäh's sons, Benyam and Yoséf, were rounded up along with a number of other educated Ethiopians and summarily executed. Other members of the Wärgenäh family, including *Wäyzäro* Qätsäla, from whom Wärgenäh had now become estranged following rumours of infidelity, his first son, Téwodros, and his daughters and in-laws, were interned and eventually deported to Italy.

Wärgenäh had to turn his attention to securing the freedom of members of his family and arranging for his and their settlement in India, as he found his financial means increasingly inadequate to support his life in London. To tide over the difficult times, he was forced to sell the Ethiopian legation building in London, which he had bought on his own account in the first place. In the end, he managed to take only four of his children with him to India. But such was the generosity of his spirit, even under straitened circumstances, that he took into his care two Ethiopian refugee families from Kenya as well.³⁰ Wärgenäh remained in India until 1941/2, when he returned to Ethiopia and dedicated the rest of his life to educating his grandchildren and the children of his relatives and neighbours at his big house in Shola, in the eastern outskirts of Addis Ababa. He died on 9 October 1952.³¹

Käntiba Gäbru Dästa

Käntiba Gäbru Dästa defies the generational categories that we have tried to employ in this study, for his life and career spans three generations. The circumstances of his educational formation has much in common with those we have described as pioneers above, people like Berru Pétros and Mahdärä-Qal. His period of active service puts him into the class of the first-generation intellectuals discussed here. Yet he was to partake of the exciting adventure of the second-generation intellectuals as they grouped themselves under the banner of the Black Lion organization and fought for liberty from the Fascist Italian occupation. It was not only longevity, but

²⁸ For British pressure on the emperor to restrain his outspoken minister from continuing to make statements 'of an abusive nature', see FO 371/20920, minutes, 18.1.37.

²⁹ Ato Emmanuel Abraham and Dr Ammanuél Gäbrä-Sellásé.

³⁰ There is copious correspondence in the British Foreign Office archives concerning the fate of his family in Italy and his application to settle in India. See FO 371/20921, Stonehewer-Bird to FO, tel., 15.4.37; FO 371/23374, Perth to Oliphant, 17.2.39; Martin to Halifax, 13.3.39; FO minutes, 18.5.39; Martin to Bentinck, 25.6.39, where, exasperated by the perseverance with which Wärgenäh pursued his applications, Bentinck, in characteristic Foreign Office style, reminds us of Wärgenäh's origins: 'I begin to bear a grudge against the British soldier or N.C.O. [*sic*] who picked up Dr Martin when a baby on the battlefield of Magdala'; FO 371/23375, Martin to Bentinck, 5.7.39, 31.7.39; Martin to Halifax, 4.11.39.

³¹ Family biography.

also diversity, that was the hallmark of his career, for it is difficult to think of any other Ethiopian of his age who saw as many varied places and underwent as divergent experiences as Gäbru. He was also a polyglot, having mastered Arabic, English and German.

Like Wärqenäh, Gäbru, whose original name was Gobaw, was a native of the Gondär region and his childhood was very much associated with the life of Tēwodros. He was born in Aläfa district in Bägēmdēr, of a Fälasha family according to Quirin,³² around the time Tēwodros came to the throne in 1855.³³ His family later moved to Dämbya, where it lived in affluence until the combined assault of raids and famine reduced it to dire straits. Gäbru was forced to seek succour first in the house of a relative, *Shaga* Webu, and then at Tēwodros's crafts and arms workshop at Gafat. It was there that he developed perhaps the most important relationship of his career. He was introduced to the German missionary, J. Mayer, who gave him his first education.³⁴

Again, like Wärqenäh, Gäbru accompanied Emperor Tēwodros in his final trip to Maqdala and was later taken along by the triumphant Napier expedition. He found himself in Alexandria and then in Jerusalem, where, like Berru Pétros before him, he was patronized by the CMS missionary Samuel Gobat and enrolled in a mission school. He moved to Basel, Switzerland, in 1872. Unable to return to Ethiopia after he finished his studies because of the Ethio-Egyptian hostilities, he joined two other veteran sponsors of Ethiopian education abroad, Martin Flad and J.L. Krapf. He assisted the latter in the translation of the Scriptures into Amharic and was sent by the former in 1879 to work among the Fälasha, at the centre that had already been set up at Azäzo near Gondär.³⁵

His happy reunion with his parents and relatives was clouded, however, by the animosity of his fellow evangelists at Azäzo and he decided to leave for Europe. He was intercepted by Flad at Suakin and brought back to Mätämma on the Sudan border with the view of effecting a reconciliation with them. An encounter with an Oromo slave inspired him with the idea of breaking fresh ground of evangelical activity in Wälläga. On his way, he was drawn to the court of *Negus* Täklä-Haymanot of Gojjam, who appointed

³² Quirin, *Ethiopian Jews*: 199.

³³ Gäbru's Memoirs (IES Ms. 1682: 1) gives as his birthdate 19 *Genbot* 1845 (i.e. 26 May 1853) and this is also the year that Mahtämä-Sellasé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, presumably on the basis of information from Gäbru's relatives, gives in *Ché Bäläw* (1961EC): 88. But the biography published recently by his son, Colonel Dawit Gäbru, dates Gäbru's birth to *Säné* 1848 (i.e. June–July 1856); Kántiba *Gäbru Dästa Yä-Ityop'ya Qers* (1985EC). This is the same date given in Gäbru's own *Säwasew*. Two foreign sources suggest the year 1857: FO 371/10877, enclosure in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25, which gives his age as 68 in 1925; and Felix Rosen, *Eine deutsche Gesandtschaft in Abessinien* (1907): 296, which makes him 48 in 1905.

³⁴ Gäbru Memoirs: 1–10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 14–28; Rosen: 296; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 94; Flad: 312; FO 371/10877, enclosure in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25. Heruy and the Foreign Office document both state that Gäbru was also educated in Germany; but this may just be an inference from the fact that Gäbru spoke German, which he could of course have picked up just as well from the German part of Switzerland, where Basel is located.

him over the district of Gendä Bärät to the south of the Abbay, which Gäbru converted into an evangelical base. Although he impressed Tāklä-Haymanot's courtiers by a visual demonstration of the lethal qualities of the spirit (*arāqe*) that they relished so much (pouring the cup of spirit that he was offered on a lamp and making it come ablaze), he also alarmed them by talk of checking the slave trade.³⁶

The Battle of Embabo (6 June 1882), in which the Shāwan forces led by Menilek decisively defeated the forces of Tāklä-Haymanot, fateful as it was for the balance of power in Ethiopian politics, also effected a turn in Gäbru's fortune. The victor became his new patron, and he applied himself to evangelical work among the Méttä Oromo in western Shāwa. He also engaged in some tricks that made him an awesome figure in the eyes of the local population, such as burning cow dung with the reflection of a thick-lensed glass or even striking light with a match.³⁷

The years after 1885 were difficult for missionaries, as Emperor Yohannes imposed a ban on their activities. Gäbru left the country for Jerusalem, from where he was sent to do evangelical work in Zanzibar.³⁸ He then moved to Aden, where he was engaged in proselytizing among freed Oromo slaves, before returning, for the third time, to his country, more exactly to Harär. The governor, *Ras* Mäkonnen, gave him land and appointed him chief of his newly established police force. In the wake of the Ethiopian victory at Adwa, Gäbru was elevated to the post of *kāntiba* of Gondär. At the same time he was given the delicate task of serving as Menilek's envoy to the Khalifa Abdullahi of the Sudan, as part of the emperor's sly diplomatic stratagem of showing overtures of friendship to the Mahdists while simultaneously humouring the British with an anti-Mahdist stance. Gäbru claims that he got from the Khalifa a *carte blanche* for Menilek to incorporate the former's rebellious vassals on the Ethio-Sudanese borderland.³⁹ But that did not save him from being used as a scapegoat when the British, following their victory over the Mahdist state, confronted Menilek with some embarrassing passages in his correspondence with Khalifa Abdullahi. Gäbru was incarcerated at Ankobar for 18 months.⁴⁰

³⁶ Gäbru Memoirs: 33–40. See Flad: 343, 356, 360, who writes that Gäbru was actually sent by him to Gojjam at the request of *Negus* Tāklä-Haymanot, who was then actively engaged in the incorporation of the Oromo lands to the south of the Abbay; see Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia* (1978): 246.

³⁷ Gäbru Memoirs: 42–6.

³⁸ In a letter to Menilek's Swiss adviser, Alfred Ilg, Gäbru asks him to convey his greetings to his mother and his relatives in Dämbya, if they had survived 'that scourge and calamity', presumably a reference to the Mahdist invasion of that region in early 1888. Interestingly, Gäbru signs his letter as Gābrä-Egziabhēr Gobaw Dästa: letter of 10.11.1888, Dar-es-Salaam, Ilg Family Papers (courtesy of Prof. Dr Bairu Tafla of Hamburg University).

³⁹ Gäbru Memoirs: 62. This seems to substantiate a strong local tradition for such a hand-over of the shaykhdoms of Asosa, Béni Shangul and Khomosha by the Khalifa to Menilek in 1897: see Alessandro Triulzi, *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy. Prelude to the History of a No-Man's Land: Bela Shangul, Wallaga, Ethiopia (ca. 1880–1898)* (1981): 174.

⁴⁰ Gäbru Memoirs: 48–64; Wārqenäh Diary: 64. Wārqenäh comments: 'His case as far as one can see is a painful example of the Abyssinian administration of justice.'

In 1901, restored to imperial favour, Gäbru accompanied his former patron, *Ras* Mäkonnen, to the coronation of Edward VII of the United Kingdom. But the recovery of the Gondär post, which he sought so much and which had given him his enduring title, eluded him to the end. The emperor seems to have decided to restrict him to the role for which he was eminently qualified, that of serving as intermediary in the emperor's relations with foreigners. Thus, he specialized as the emperor's factotum for German affairs, serving as companion to the German mission that came to Ethiopia in 1905 and interpreter to the German legation that was set up subsequently.⁴¹ Gäbru claims that Menilek considered giving him one of the portfolios when he set up ministries in 1907 but was dissuaded by his advisers, who could not countenance the idea of someone without a fief or retainers being raised to such an exalted post. As a compromise solution, he was assigned to assist the minister of the interior.⁴²

Whatever the validity of the above assertion, there seems to be no doubt that Gäbru was marginalized in Menilek's Ethiopia – and even later. Testimony to this is given by two of his fellow intellectuals, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ and Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé. Gäbrä-Heywät has the following to say about the fate of *Käntiba* Gäbru and *Aläqa* Tayyā:

ሰላት ዓመት ምሉእ አዲስ አበባ ላይ ሰቀመጥ እንደ እነዚህ ሁለት ሰዎች አርጎ መገገሥትን
የጊወድ ሰው አላየሁም። ይህ ደገነታችው ገን እስከ ሃሬ ድረስ አልታወቀላችውም
ይመስለኛል። እጅግ ያላገኘል የነሱን ዕድል ያየ ሰው የኢትዮጵያ መገገሥት ሰወዳጁ
አይጠነቅቅም ሲሉ ተሰፋ ይቆርጣልና።

During my three years' stay in Addis Ababa [presumably after his return from abroad], I did not meet any one who loved his government as these two men did. But this quality of theirs remains unrecognized to this day. It is very sad. For their fate makes one come to the depressing conclusion that the Ethiopian government cares little for its friends.⁴³

Likewise, Heruy concludes his biographical entry on Gäbru with the following words: *Käntiba* Gäbru 'leads a life of frustration and sorrow, for his advice to the nobility to introduce European civilization and expand education goes unheeded'.⁴⁴

To make matters worse, Gäbru came to be involved in the controversy over the alleged poisoning of Menilek in 1909. The allegation, which implicated certain palace officials close to Taytu, was made by the German doctor, Steinkühler, who had been detailed to look after the ailing emperor. Gäbru, as the doctor's assistant and confidant, was hounded by Taytu and her supporters and he had to seek asylum at the German legation. The

⁴¹ Gäbru Memoirs: 64–6; Heruy, *YäHaywät Tarik*: 94; Rosen: 197, 432; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Ṣekrä Nägär*: 88.

⁴² Gäbru Memoirs: 66. Gäbru actually reminisces that he was made director, but that title does not appear to have been in usage at that early date.

⁴³ 'Ate Menilek-na Ityopya', in *Berhan Yehun* (1912): 344.

⁴⁴ Heruy, *YäHaywät Tarik*: 94.

matter assumed the character of a minor diplomatic crisis, as Menilek, possibly under instigation from Taytu, wrote to the German *kaiser* making Gäbru the chief culprit for the whole controversy and requesting that the German legation hand him over to face trial.⁴⁵

Accompanying official missions abroad as interpreter seems to have been the task most readily allotted to him. Thus, he was sent with *Däjjach* (later *Ras*) Kasa to the coronation of King George V in 1910.⁴⁶ In June 1919 he accompanied a mission led by *Däjjach* Nadäw to England and the United States to congratulate the Allies on their victory in the first world war.⁴⁷ On his return, Gäbru was appointed to the post of *näggadras* of Säyyo in Wälläga. In 1925 he was apparently a member of the council of advisers to Queen Zäwditu, for his name (with biographical data) appears in a British Foreign Office list of these advisers.⁴⁸

Little is known about Gäbru's career in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the most active period for the intellectuals under investigation here. He made some contributions to *Berhanena Sälam*. The next we hear of him is during the Italian occupation when he joined the group of young Ethiopians belonging to the Black Lion organization. He gave himself up to the Italians following the surrender of *Ras* Emeru, its leader, and the disbanding of the organization.⁴⁹ He was deported with a number of other Ethiopians to the Mediterranean island of Asinara. It was there that he wrote the memoirs used here to reconstruct the earlier years of his life and career. Set free following liberation in 1941, he returned to Ethiopia. He died in 1949/50.

Gäbru was first married to the daughter, possibly by an Ethiopian wife, of J. Mayer, his patron in Gafat.⁵⁰ Divorced, he was subsequently married several times. Among his children were Senedu Gäbru, a woman of strong literary bent who later distinguished herself as the directress of Empress Mänän School and the first female deputy in Haylä-Sellase's parliament, and Colonel Dawit Gäbru, a distinguished police officer in Haylä-Sellase's government and his father's biographer.

Another prominent intellectual who acquired his education under missionary patronage was Tamrat Amanuél. Tamrat also represents the high point of the pattern of missionary recruitment of Fälasha youth that had begun in the nineteenth century. Tamrat was born about 1893 in the Gondär region. His education abroad, in France and Italy, was sponsored by that indefatigable champion of the alleged Ethiopian component of the Jewish diaspora, Faïtlovitch. On the conclusion of his first trip to Ethiopia

⁴⁵ Tayyā Papers, Gäbrä-Egziabhé to Tayyā, 8.4.04/17.12.08. AA/R14902, Menilek to Wilhelm II, 21.12.01/27.8.09.

⁴⁶ Heruy, *YäHaywät Tarik*: 94; Mahtämä-Sellase, *Ṣekrä Nägär*: 88; FO 371/10877, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25.

⁴⁷ Heruy, *YäHaywät Tarik*: 94; Mahtämä-Sellase: *Ṣekrä Nägär*: 88; FO 371/3494, FO to Addis Ababa, tel., 6.6.19; FO to Washington, 28.6.19; *The Times*, 13.6.19.

⁴⁸ FO 371/10877, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25; Heruy, *YäHaywät Tarik*: 94.

⁴⁹ Herbert M. Hanson and Delia Hanson, *For God and Emperor* (1958): 56.

⁵⁰ Rosen: 296; Gäbru Memoirs: 48. See also Dawit: 46, however, for information that Gäbru abandoned his fiancée, Mayer's daughter, to marry the daughter of another missionary, Bender.

in 1904–5, Faitlovitch took along to Europe Tamrat and another Fālasha by the name of Gété Ērmyas. Tamrat, like Afāwārq Gäbrä-Iyyāsus before him, also taught Amharic in Italy, and it was in these circumstances that he came to assume, again like Afāwārq, the honorific rank of professor. On his return to Ethiopia in 1920, he was put in charge of the Fālasha school in Addis Ababa set up by Faitlovitch. During the Italian occupation, Tamrat first moved the Fālasha school to the Gondär region. Later, unable to continue his work, he was forced to flee the country. After 1941, he worked in the Ministry of Education and was subsequently posted to the Ethiopian diplomatic missions in France and Israel.⁵¹ His most important contribution to the intellectual history of modern Ethiopia is a brilliant essay on modern Amharic literature, in which he discusses with impressive balance and erudition the works of his fellow intellectuals.⁵²

Onésimos Näsib

The evangelical work among the Oromo that had eluded Gäbru was to be accomplished with greater success by Onésimos Näsib, an Oromo of Illubabor. Onésimos was born in the village of Hurumu in Illubabor around the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵³ Interestingly enough, his original name was Hika, ‘the translator’, an almost prophetic designation in view of the fact that Onésimos’s name was to be immortalized for his translation of the Bible into the Oromo language. Hika had a tragic childhood. His father died while Hika was only aged four. Soon after, he was abducted by the slavers that were so rampant at the time. He changed masters several times on the slave trail to the coast before he was liberated by Werner Münzinger, the French consul at Massawa.⁵⁴

In October 1870, Münzinger handed Hika over to the Swedish missionaries and thus initiated an association that was to have a permanent effect on his life. His chief patron was B.P. Lundahl, who arranged for Hika’s baptism on 31 March 1872, Easter Sunday, under the new name of

⁵¹ Oral communication from Ato Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya; Steven Kaplan, *Les Falaschas* (1990): 39–41; Jacques Faitlovitch, *Quer durch Abessinien. Meine Zweite Reise zu den Falaschas* (1910): 13–14 (with pictures of Gété and Tamrat on p. 14), 68–9; Quirin, *Ethiopian Jews*: 194, 197–8. See also Edward Ullendorff, *From the Bible to Enrico Cerulli* (1990), which dates Tamrat’s birth to 1888 and his death to the end of 1963.

⁵² See below, pp. 143, 144, 151, 159–60.

⁵³ Here again, there is a discrepancy of a few years between the two main sources for the reconstruction of his life and career. A text compiled on the basis of the testimonies of informants in Näqämté, including his grandson Idossa Gämächis, gives the year 1842EC (i.e. 1849/50) as the year of his birth, whereas Aren: 164, 165, n. 99, arrives at about 1856 after careful consideration of various dates given by Onésimos’s Swedish patron at Massawa, B.P. Lundhal. I am grateful to my former student, the late Shumet Admas, for conducting the interviews in Näqämté and for compiling the text (hereafter referred to as Idossa *et al.*).

⁵⁴ Aren: 165, who says Onésimos was sold four times before his manumission and emphatically denies that he was sold eight times, as claimed by some Swedish sources, n. 95. Idossa *et al.* also claim that Onésimos was sold eight times and that Münzinger actually purchased Onésimos into freedom.

Onésimos. Onésimos left for Sweden in the summer of 1876 and studied for five years at a theological training institute. On his return he married Mehrät Haylu, daughter of *Aläqa* Haylu of Gojjam, a teacher at the Swedish mission who had been secretary to Emperor Téwodros. This happened as he prepared to leave on his first evangelical mission to his native land.⁵⁵

Because of Emperor Yohannes's ban on missionary activity, Onésimos's party had to take a roundabout route to Wälläga. They had to sail up the Red Sea to the Sudanese port of Suakin, traverse Sudanese territory to Berber and then sail up the Nile to the Ethiopian border. They reached the border town of Famaka on 4 January 1882. After a tentative crossing of the border, the party retraced its steps, dissuaded by reports of troubled conditions in the interior. Three years later, in 1885, Onésimos led another futile expedition to the Oromo country, this time via Tajura and Shäwa. The party had to return from Entotto in face of opposition from the Shäwan bishop, *Abunä* Mattéwos, in spite of earlier assurances from *Negus* Menilek that they could proceed to the west.⁵⁶

Frustrated in his ardent desire to spread the Gospel among his people, Onésimos embarked on the translation of the Bible into his native tongue. Given the fact that Onésimos had left his homeland as a child, this was a formidable undertaking. But ably assisted by Astér Gänno, a native of Limmu (near Jimma), who exhibited an extraordinary feel for the Oromo language, Onésimos was able to accomplish the publication of the New Testament in 1893 and of the Old Testament in 1899. Onésimos based his translation on the Amharic version and used the Swedish version for cross-checking.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, some years after the death of his first wife, Mehrät, in November 1888, Onésimos had married Lydia Dimbo of Säyyo (in southwestern Wälläga). He also started evangelical work among the fairly large Oromo community, numbering about 500, in Asmara and was able to train a number of Oromo evangelists. This became the prelude to his final, and successful, bid to reach the Oromo country. In 1903, he set out with his wife and three children and two of his new recruits from Asmara. In Addis Ababa, through the good offices of *Käntiba* Gäbru Dästa, Onésimos had an audience with both Emperor Menilek, to whom he presented a copy of his Oromo Bible, and *Abunä* Mattéwos, and the mission was favourably received. Armed with letters of support from both, it arrived at Näqämté on 15 April 1904, and was 'received with great honour' by the governor, *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Egziabhér Moroda.⁵⁸ Although the initial objective of the mission had been Onésimos's homeland of Illubabor, the enthusiasm that Gäbrä-Egziabhér showed for the mission and the great

⁵⁵ Aren: 165, 212, 250; Idossa *et al.*

⁵⁶ Aren: 252–9, 274; Idossa *et al.*

⁵⁷ Aren: 383–5. Idossa *et al.* claim that 'the language that Onésimos found of greatest help in translating the Bible was Swedish'. It is not clear, however, whether this means that he used the Swedish version as a base or whether he constantly referred to it for cross-checking.

⁵⁸ Aren: 385, 413–20; Idossa *et al.*

prestige that he enjoyed at Menilek's court apparently deflected it to Wälläga.

Onésimos was given land in Boji, not far from Näjjo, the alternative capital of *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Egziabhér. With a new influx of Eritrean evangelists like Gäbrä-Iyyäsus Tasfay and Gäbrä-Selläsé Tasfa-Gabr, Boji soon developed into a thriving community. A school was opened and Onésimos had one of his strange encounters with local manners. Irritated by the habit of the students of covering up their mouths and noses with their togas (*kuta*) while sitting in class, he remarked in feigned innocence whether there was something emitting a bad odour in the room. The students took their cue and abandoned the habit. Onésimos himself had to conform to local attitudes by abandoning his Western attire for the traditional dress, and his shoes for sandals.⁵⁹

But the above was only a foretaste of the more severe trials that Onésimos was to endure. The Orthodox clergy found him a dangerous rival for the allegiance of the local population, the more so as he was preaching in the vernacular. *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Egziabhér himself, who had to play a balancing act between local sentiments and his loyalties to the centre, was not much of a support to him. Onésimos was summoned to Addis Ababa to answer charges of undermining the Orthodox religion. He was sentenced by *Abunä* Mattéwos to imprisonment and loss of his property. But Emperor Menilek did not approve of the judgment and, on his instructions, *Aläqa* (later *Afä Negus*) Estifanos reversed the sentence and set Onésimos free. Menilek is even said to have ordered that Onésimos be given employment in the Ministry of Commerce, but the order could not be carried out because he reportedly did not have the required skills. At any rate, he was allowed to return to Wälläga but with injunctions not to engage in preaching. He regained his freedom to evangelize in the last months of the reign of Iyyasu and enjoyed unrestricted liberties in the following years. He died suddenly on 21 June 1931.⁶⁰

Näggädras Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ

The most celebrated of the early twentieth-century intellectuals, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ led a life that has perhaps been the least documented. His lifespan was also one of the shortest, lasting barely 33 years. He was born on 30 July 1886 in the village of May Mesham in the district of Adwa.⁶¹ His father, *Shäqa* Baykädañ, was in the service of Emperor Yohannes and died with the emperor at the Battle of Mätämma on 9 March 1889. The

⁵⁹ Idossa *et al.*

⁶⁰ The date is from Idossa's contemporary obituary of his grandfather in *BS*, 12.11.31. Idossa *et al.* give the date 11 *Säne* 1923/18 June 1931, which may be a reflection of a lapse of memory. Aren: 424–8, 438–9; Terfassa Diga, 'A Short Biography of Onésimos Nesib c. 1850–1931', BA thesis (HSIU, 1973): 36, 42–3.

⁶¹ According to Tēgabé Asräs, 'YäNäggädras Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ Acher YäHeywät Tarik,' BA thesis (HSIU, 1962EC): 7. Mahtämä-Selläsé Wäldä-Mäsqäl, *Ché Bäläw* (1961EC): 85 gives the year 1877EC, i.e. 1884/5.

early 1890s were a period of exceptional turbulence in Tegräy, where the political disintegration and psychological void created by the death of the emperor, the ravages of one of the longest and most devastating famines the country had ever known, and the depredations that attended Menilek's campaign of 1890 to assert his new imperial authority, all combined to produce great instability. It was in these circumstances that Gäbrä-Heywät fled with some other companions to Eritrea at the age of seven.⁶² According to Richard Caulk, Gäbrä-Heywät joined the Swedish mission school at Menkullu, on the mainland off Massawa.⁶³

A trip to the port of Massawa that he subsequently made with his friends was to change decisively the course of his life. Gäbrä-Heywät and his friends got permission from the captain of a German ship docked there to go aboard and look around. When time came for the ship's departure, Gäbrä-Heywät stowed away. When the captain eventually discovered his 'guest', it was too late to do anything. On arrival at the destination, he entrusted the young boy to a rich Austrian family, which adopted him. Under the benevolent patronage of his Austrian sponsors, Gäbrä-Heywät learnt the German language, and is said to have gone on to study medicine at Berlin University.⁶⁴

After completing his studies in Germany, he returned to his country. In the Ethiopian court, he had the good fortune of winning the friendship of *Däjjach* Yeggäzu BäHabté, who assigned someone to teach Gäbrä-Heywät Amharic.⁶⁵ After seven months of studious application, he was able to master the language to such a degree that he was to emerge as one of the finest writers of Amharic prose. It was also *Däjjach* Yeggäzu, along with *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis, who recommended Gäbrä-Heywät to Menilek. Gäbrä-Heywät was reportedly made private secretary and interpreter to the emperor. Apparently in his capacity as interpreter, he also accompanied an official mission to Germany led by *Däjjach* Mäshäsha Wärqé in the summer of 1907.

As in the case of *Hakim* Wärqenäh and the British, the illness of Emperor Menilek lent him some diplomatic utility to the German government. He was attached to the German doctor Steinkühler, and detailed to treat the ailing emperor and thereby promote the fortunes of German diplomacy. Again, like Wärqenäh, Gäbrä-Heywät failed to win the confidence of *Taytu*, who reportedly forbade him to touch the invalid. The acrimony that subsequently developed between the empress and the German doctor, who

⁶² Tegabé: 8. One of Gäbrä-Heywät's companions was Zäräfa, who, according to Tegabé, after obtaining military education in Germany, later became chief of the Dire Dawa police. This is most probably a reference to *Fitawrari* (as he subsequently became) Zäfäru, whose career as head of the Dire Dawa police is well documented. See, for instance, Shiferaw Bekele, 'Aspects of the History of Dire Dawa (1902 to 1936)', *Proceedings of the Fourth Seminar of the Department of History* (1989): 107, 111.

⁶³ Richard Caulk, 'Dependency, Gebre Heywet Baykedagn, and the Birth of Ethiopian Reformism', *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Session B (1978): 570.

⁶⁴ Tegabé: 9–13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 14–15.

had provoked the controversy about the poisoning of the ailing emperor, could only have reflected badly on his Ethiopian associate. In the potent article ‘Até Menilek-na Ityopya’, there is an allusion to the German minister, Dr Zintgraff, and his interpreter instigating the nobility against Taytu’s ambitious designs on the throne.⁶⁶ It was probably under these circumstances that he chose to exile himself to the neighbouring British colony of the Sudan sometime in November 1909.⁶⁷

Gäbrä-Heywät fell critically ill on his return from the Sudan and was hospitalized in Massawa. As the brief preamble suggests, it was apparently while he was convalescing – and not, as Tegabé claims,⁶⁸ while in the Sudan – that he wrote ‘Até Menilek-na Ityopya’. In the preamble the author pays a glowing tribute to his lifelong friend, Pawlos Mānamāno, to whom, next to God, he says, he owed his life. Pawlos was to render Gäbrä-Heywät an equally worthy service a few years later when he published posthumously his major work, a treatise on political economy, *Māngest-na Yä Hezb Astādādär*.

‘Até Menilek-na Ityopya’, which appeared in 1912 in a Swedish mission journal in Asmara, *Sia la Luce* (*Berhan Yehun* in Amharic), will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. But two things are worthy of note here. The first is how his sojourn in the Sudan, and much earlier in Eritrea, impressed him deeply and forced him to contrast the backwardness of his country with the progress he believes to have been achieved in the two colonies. As he writes:

በዙርያችን ያሉትን አገሮች ብንመለከት አእምሮ ያላቸው ሕዝቦች በብዙ ትጋት
ሲያለምቸው እናያለን። ይልቁንም በደርቡኾች ጠፍቶ የነበረውን የሱዳንን መሬት ብናይ
እንገቢጣችን የሚመስል ያለምሮ ሕዝብ ሲገዛው ምድረ በዳም በሆነ የደስታ ገነት እን
ዲሆን ይመስለናል። በዙርያችን ትኞችን ኮሎኒያችን ይዘው ያሉ ሕዝቦችም
ያለምቸው ጋይል አንቅፋትን ሁሉ እያሸነፈ ወደ ፊት ይገፋል መሬት ጠባታልና –
አእምሮም በአእምሮ ካልሆነ በቀር በሌላ አትታገድም። ለሰዚህ ወጥለት በድንቅላርናው
ለሚቀመጥ ሕዝብ ውሎ አድሮ ይደመሰሳልና።

If we look around our neighbouring countries, we see intelligent people developing them with diligence. In particular, if we look at the Sudan, which had been ravaged by the Dervishes, we realize how a desert can be transformed into a Garden of Eden when ruled by such intelligent people like the British. All around us colonies are marching ahead undeterred by any obstacles. For intelligence can only be checked by intelligence. Woe, then, to a people that persists in its ignorance, for it is ultimately bound to perish.⁶⁹

The second point to note is Gäbrä-Heywät’s balanced appraisal of Empress Taytu, despite all that he had endured at her hands.⁷⁰ The major

⁶⁶ Gäbrä-Heywät, ‘Até Menilek’: 347.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; Tegabé: 16; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 89.

⁶⁸ Tegabé: 18; see also, however, Caulk, ‘Dependency’: 569.

⁶⁹ Gäbrä-Heywät, ‘Até Menilek’: 350.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 346–7.

fault that he finds in her otherwise illustrious career is her attempt to disrupt Iyyasu's succession to Menilek, not the hard time she gave him and fellow intellectuals like Afäwärq and Gäbru.

As the last paragraph of the article makes clear, 'Até Menilek-na Ityopya' was addressed to Iyyasu, the heir to the throne. Disappointed by Menilek as a modernizing monarch, Gäbrä-Heywät apparently pinned his hopes on the young prince. He was soon to be disillusioned, as Iyyasu failed to demonstrate the resolution and consistency necessary for the social and economic change that Gäbrä-Heywät and his fellow intellectuals recommended. Like Täklä-Hawaryat, Gäbrä-Heywät had no choice but to shift his hopes and his allegiance to another young prince, Täfäri Mäkonnen, the future Haylä-Sellásé. And after Täfäri became heir to the throne in September 1916 Gäbrä-Heywät started to occupy major administrative posts, as inspector of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway in 1916 and *näggadras* of Dire Dawa in 1917. He died on 1 July 1919.⁷¹

The protégés of Emperor Menilek & Ras Mäkonnen

Näggadras Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus

Arguably the most vitriolic of the intellectuals, Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus was born in the district of Zägé, the peninsula on the southern shores of Lake Tana, on 10 July 1868.⁷² He grew up attached to the church of Ura Kidanä-Mehrät, where he went through the various levels of traditional church education under his grandfather, *Mämher* Denqé, a noted scholar. Afäwärq also practised traditional painting, a popular occupation in the locality.⁷³

Afäwärq was related to Taytu, and it was apparently through her that he was introduced to Menilek's court sometime after 1880. There he became acquainted with the Italian envoy, Count Pietro Antonelli, who, impressed by the young man's artistic leanings, asked for and obtained Menilek's permission to take him to Italy and enrol him in an art institute. In September 1887 he set off on his first trip to Italy. It had the character of an official mission: Afäwärq had an audience with the Italian king, Umberto I, when he presented gifts sent by Menilek. He was admitted to the International Institute in Turin, where he attended courses in painting at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts.⁷⁴

⁷¹ According to Caulk, 'Dependency': 573, presumably on the basis of oral information.

⁷² Gian Carlo Stella, 'Un personaggio amletico: Afework Ghevre Jesus (1868–1947),' *Africa* (1986): 594, on the basis of the wedding records of Afäwärq in Italy. Zeqargachäw Haylä-Giyorgis, 'YäNäggadras Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus ZäBehérä Zägé YäHeywät Tarik', BA thesis (HSIU, 1964EC): 1, gives 3 *Hamle* 1860/9 July 1868.

⁷³ Zeqargachaw: 1.

⁷⁴ Stella: 584–5. Zeqargachäw: 2 mixes up this first trip of Afäwärq with the second one he took with Gugsä Dargé, Menilek's cousin.

The arrival in late 1889 of the official Ethiopian delegation led by *Däjjach* (later *Ras*) Mäkonnen transformed Afäwärq from an obscure art student to the official interpreter of the Ethiopian mission. Mäkonnen had arrived after the signing of the Treaty of Wechalé on 2 May 1889 and ended up signing an additional convention at Naples on 1 October 1889, by which he unwittingly ratified the *de facto* Italian territorial acquisitions in the Märäb Mellash after Wechalé.⁷⁵ Afäwärq does not seem to have been much help in seeing through this insidious formula, although he later claimed that it was he who first pointed out to Mäkonnen the notorious discrepancy between the Amharic and Italian versions of Article XVII of the treaty.⁷⁶

Afäwärq returned to Ethiopia with the delegation and reached Addis Ababa on 11 July 1890. He came back at a time when relations between Ethiopia and Italy were fraught with tension and acrimony following the disagreements over Article XVII. His association with the Italians – Afäwärq sometimes served as interpreter to the Italian envoy, Leopoldo Traversi⁷⁷ – could scarcely have endeared him to Empress Taytu, the uncompromising leader of the anti-Italian movement.⁷⁸ Other sources of discord between Taytu and Afäwärq that are usually cited are the unflattering portrait of the empress that he is supposed to have drawn and the disrespect for tradition that he showed by entering Entotto Raguél church with his shoes on.⁷⁹

At any rate, Afäwärq soon got a respite from Taytu's hostility. In September 1894 Afäwärq, *Lej* Gugsä Dargé, son of Menilek's uncle and adviser, *Ras* Dargé, and *Lej* Qetaw Zamanuél, son of *Azazh* Zamanuél, were entrusted by Menilek to Alfred Ilg to be enrolled at the International College in Neuchâtel in Switzerland, in reality to remove them as far as possible from the fury of the empress, who resented their pro-Italian sentiments. Afäwärq had already developed a close friendship with Ilg and had married his daughter by an Ethiopian wife.⁸⁰

From Switzerland, Afäwärq launched an audacious enterprise that was to mark his first betrayal of his motherland. On 19 December 1895, in the

⁷⁵ Stella: 585–6.

⁷⁶ Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, *Dagmawi Ate Menilek* (1901): 70.

⁷⁷ Stella: 588.

⁷⁸ Alain Rouaud, *Afä-Wärq 1868–1947 un intellectuel éthiopien témoin de son temps* (1991): 92.

⁷⁹ Zeqargachaw: 4–6. Afäwärq apparently alludes to this 'shoe episode' in his satire of Ethiopian society, *Guide du voyageur en Abyssinie* (1908): 150–1. For Rouaud's tentative suggestions, see pp. 85–7. According to Stella: 587, Taytu was piqued not by Afäwärq's portrayal of her but by the paintings of an Italian artist, Jacovacci, sent by the Italian government through Afäwärq; even this, Stella argues, was merely a cover for Taytu's reluctance to receive a gift from a state that had then become the declared enemy of Ethiopia.

⁸⁰ According to Stella: 589. Zeqargachaw: 11 writes that Afäwärq was married to a 'relative' of Ilg, and in Switzerland rather than in Ethiopia. See BS, 20.7.33, for Afäwärq's own version of his 'exile', where he describes in detail how the empress suddenly turned against him in 1893/94. Trying to mollify her, Afäwärq sent her a painting of the Crucifixion. What he got for his trouble was the empress's furious message:

ዐስታህ ዐስታህ በኋል ያደርገህ ('May the Lord crucify you a hundred times!').

middle of the Italo-Ethiopian war that culminated in the Battle of Adwa, he and his two companions crossed over the Swiss-Italian border and put themselves at the service of the Italian authorities. The flight appears to have been the fruit of contacts that had been going on since November between Afāwārq and his Italian mentor, Traversi. But news of the confiscation of his property in Gojjam, possibly by orders of Taytu, might have pushed Afāwārq to cross the Rubicon.⁸¹ Nor do the young princes appear to have been liberally equipped to continue their education in Switzerland, if one can tell from Gugsä's letters to Ilg.⁸² Moreover, the lack of any reliable news about the state of the Italo-Ethiopian war must have made the three Ethiopians vulnerable to Italian propaganda.⁸³

Whatever the circumstances of their defection, the Italians speedily sent their precious acquisitions to the war front: they arrived at Massawa on 6 January and joined the Italian commander-in-chief, General Baratieri, at his command post at Edaga Hamus on 21 January. At the centre of the whole bizarre episode was, of course, Gugsä Dargé, whom the Italians hoped to use as a rival claimant to the Ethiopian throne by virtue of his being the grandson of *Negus* Sahlä-Sellasé of Shāwa.⁸⁴ Nothing of consequence came out of this misadventure and the three young men had already been sent back to Asmara when the Italians encountered their debacle at Adwa in March 1896.⁸⁵

After that, Afāwārq settled in Italy to a life that was to witness some of the most important literary and intellectual accomplishments of his career. He stayed briefly in Turin, then moved to Naples, where he began to work with the famous Ethiopicist Francesco Gallina at the Istituto per l'Oriente. In 1904, he married Eugenia Rossi, whom he had come to know during his stay at the International Institute in Turin. During his stay in Naples, from 1902 to 1912, Afāwārq composed his major works: a book on Amharic grammar, an Italian-Amharic conversation manual, the satirical *Guide du voyageur*, reputedly the first Amharic novel, *Lebb Wälläd Tarik* or *Tobiya*, his ingratiating biography of Menilek, *Dagmawi Até Menilek*, his new edition of the Psalms of David (*Dawit*) and a study of the Amharic verb.⁸⁶

In 1912, Afāwārq moved closer to home by setting up an import-export firm in Eritrea. The death of Menilek and the accession of the young prince Iyyasu to the throne ignited in him hopes of making a fresh start in Ethiopia, after his ignominious role during the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1895-6. He

⁸¹ See IFP, Wälätä-Maryam to Afāwārq, 8.11.1895.

⁸² In one of his letters, for instance, Gugsä writes that he had to borrow 8 francs to buy an umbrella and describes his predicament because he had only one pair of underpants: IFP, Gugsä to Ilg, 27.8.1895.

⁸³ See also IFP, Gugsä, Qetaw and Afāwārq to Ilg, 21.10.1895.

⁸⁴ See Rouaud: 103-5, for a discussion of this issue.

⁸⁵ Stella: 590-3. See Heruy, *YäHeywat Tarik*: 56; Willi Loepte, *Alfred Ilg und die Äthiopische Eisenbahn* (1974): 37. Both Heruy and Loepte point to Afāwārq as the mastermind behind the whole plot, whereas Stella counters by referring to Gugsä's own legitimate reasons for defection. Interestingly enough, Loepte has nothing to say about either Ilg's initial custody of the three young men or of the matrimonial relations with Afāwārq.

⁸⁶ Stella: 595, n.57; Zeqargachaw: 12.

began writing poems lauding Iyyasu. Unfortunately for Afāwārq, however, Iyyasu was short-lived, for he was deposed in 1916 by a coalition of external and internal enemies. With the amazing dexterity for volte-face that was to be the hallmark of his career and character, Afāwārq composed an equally condemnatory poem on Iyyasu. This apparently succeeded in ingratiating him with the new authorities in Addis Ababa. In 1917 or 1918, he finally re-entered Addis Ababa, presumably at the invitation of *Ras* Tāfāri, the heir to the throne by the 1916 arrangement but in effect the de facto ruler of the country.⁸⁷

Afāwārq was first assigned to a commercial mission to the United States. In 1922 he was made *näggadras* of the commercially important eastern town of Dire Dawa and this title was to be permanently attached to his name, as in the case of Gäbrä-Heywät Baykādañ. In 1925, he succeeded Heruy Wäldä-Sellāsé as president of the special court set up to adjudicate cases involving foreigners and Ethiopian litigants. Both the *näggadrasship* of Dire Dawa and the presidency of the special court seem to have been reserved for the intellectuals, as witness the appointment of Gäbrä-Heywät and Afāwārq to the former and that of Heruy, Afāwārq and Wārqnäh to the latter. Afāwārq reportedly served as president of the special court with particular dedication and diligence until he asked to be relieved of his responsibility in 1930 on the grounds of poor health and fatigue.⁸⁸

In 1932, Afāwārq was designated Ethiopian chargé d'affaires to Rome. Given his superior knowledge of the Italians, it is difficult to think of a better choice for the post. In view of his known predilection for the Italians and his record of treason, however, his designation at such a critical juncture in Italo-Ethiopian relations strikes one as almost suicidal.⁸⁹ One explanation seems to be the fact that, with the Wälwāl crisis that triggered the Italo-Ethiopian war still two years off, Emperor Haylā-Sellāsé was still not aware of Italian designs on Ethiopia. There is no doubt, too, that Afāwārq's pro-Italian disposition had an obverse side to it: there just was no one better qualified to understand the Italians. The American minister in Addis Ababa, Addison E. Southard, suggested that the diplomatic assignment reflected Haylā-Sellāsé's desire 'to get rid of Afawork locally who has the reputation of being an obstreperous and fire-eating old gentleman with potentialities for stirring ... trouble'.⁹⁰ This consideration could apply with even greater force to the assignment of Tāklä-Hawaryat to Paris, Geneva and London in 1933, if perhaps less so than that of Wārqnäh to London in 1934. Although all three were eminently qualified for their respective posts, it is equally true that, once the emperor had seized the throne and consolidated his power, their usefulness as intellectual allies in the struggle against the traditional nobility had significantly diminished.

Be that as it may, Afāwārq appears to have found himself in a rather

⁸⁷ Stella: 595; Zeqargachāw: 14–15.

⁸⁸ Zeqargachāw: 15–16; Stella: 595–6.

⁸⁹ Angelo del Boca likewise finds Afāwārq's designation puzzling. *Gli Italiani in Africa orientale 2. La conquista dell'impero* (1986): 232n.

⁹⁰ US 701.8465/2, Southard to Sec. of State, 17.5.32.

tight corner, both materially and psychologically, in his position as chargé d'affaires in Rome. The fact that, presumably because of the lack of resources, he had to send his telegrams via the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs deprived his communications of any confidentiality. These messages to Addis Ababa also appear to have been of a contradictory nature. On the one hand, Emperor Haylä-Sellasé gives him credit for warning him of the Italian military build-up, which prompted him to set up the Red Cross.⁹¹ On the other, we find Afäwärq feeling compelled to vouch for Fascist Italy's peaceful intentions, assuring the Ethiopian foreign minister, Heruy: 'The public here keeps on talking about the certainty of war. But, rest assured, there is no danger of war; the public does not know the inner secrets.'⁹² And Afäwärq presumably had managed to be privy to those secrets. In an earlier letter, he had excused himself from attending the emperor's coronation anniversary on the grounds of inadequate funds, as he 'had expended beyond his means in an effort to understand the innermost secrets of the Italians and warn my government about them'.⁹³ It is difficult to determine whether such messages on Afäwärq's part demonstrate gullibility or an artful camouflage of intentions.

According to the under-secretary at the Italian Ministry of Colonies, Alessandro Lessona, Afäwärq had apparently come to the conviction that Italian colonial rule would do Ethiopia a lot of good: 'We have not bought him. They say he is amenable to such offers. He believes in our policy of pacification. Above all, he believes in our kind of civilization. He thinks that only Italy can redeem his country.'⁹⁴

Another high-level Italian official, Raffaele Guariglia, testified in his memoirs that Afäwärq tried to justify his support for Italian rule in Ethiopia by his belief in Ethiopia's capacity eventually to reassert its independence. Afäwärq is reported to have confided to Guariglia: 'No doubt you are surprised by what I have done and you must have lost all respect for me. But I did what I did because I believed that if Italy took over Ethiopia, civilized it and made it prosperous, the day will then come when the Ethiopians, having become civilized, strong and prosperous, will free themselves from Italy, just as the United States did with England.'⁹⁵

Yet Afäwärq returned to Ethiopia at the outbreak of the second Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935. This, his supporters argued, was clear evidence of his patriotism.⁹⁶ Or was it rather the case that Afäwärq was not prepared to tie his fate, once again, to that of the Italians and face a second period of exile in case of an Ethiopian victory? Be that as it may, in February 1936,

⁹¹ Haylä-Sellasé, *Heywäté-na Yä-Ityopya Ermejjä*, I (1965EC): 175. See also Rouaud, *Afäwärq*: 158.

⁹² MPA 1/23, Afäwärq to Heruy, 11.1.27/21.9.34.

⁹³ *Ibid.*: 6.1.27/16.9.34.

⁹⁴ Del Boca, II: 311. The first sentence in Lessona's statement refers to the fact that the Italians had managed to purchase the secret allegiance of practically all of Haylä-Sellasé's functionaries.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Stella: 597.

⁹⁶ *BS*, 31.10.35.

presumably on instructions from the emperor, Afäwärq conducted abortive negotiations with the Italians to resolve the conflict peacefully.⁹⁷ With the establishment of Italian rule in Ethiopia, however, Afäwärq abandoned all pretences and came out openly in support of the Fascist occupation, christening the day the Italians entered Addis Ababa, 5 May 1936, as the beginning of the Era of Mercy (*Amätä Mehrät*) for Ethiopia. He then proceeded to disparage the exiled emperor and the patriots fighting against Italian rule in venomous language.

Ironically, despite his fulsome espousal of the Fascist cause, Afäwärq did not escape the Fascist backlash that ensued after the abortive attempt on the life of the Italian viceroy, Rodolfo Graziani, on 19 February 1937. He, like so many others – collaborators as well as opponents – was deported to Italy and repatriated only in 1938. Finally, on 9 May 1939, he attained the post of *Afä Qésar*,⁹⁸ an honorific title that accurately describes his role as the ideologue of the Fascist order. On the collapse of Fascist rule and the re-entry of Emperor Haylä-Sellásé in Addis Ababa in 1941, Afäwärq was detained and brought to trial on charges of treason. He was condemned to death, but the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. Jimma, the commercial town in southwestern Ethiopia, became his place of confinement. It was there that he finally died, blind, on 25 September 1947.⁹⁹

Bäjerond Täklä-Hawaryat Täklä-Maryam

Täklä-Hawaryat Täklä-Maryam was born in June 1884¹⁰⁰ in the parish of Säyya Däbr in Shäwa. After going through the initial stages of traditional church education, he went to Addis Ababa to be ordained by the *abun*. He moved to Harär at the age of nine, staying at the house of a relative and chief *balämwäl* (retainer) of *Ras* Mäkonnen, *Ato* Buné. Täklä-Hawaryat accompanied Mäkonnen on the Adwa campaign in 1895–6, armed with a Winchester and 150 bullets and vowing to kill 150 Italians.¹⁰¹

Adwa was to change Täklä-Hawaryat's life decisively in an unexpected manner. A Russian Red Cross team had come to Ethiopia to care for the wounded. *Ras* Mäkonnen entrusted Täklä-Hawaryat to one of the members of the Russian mission, Count Leontieff, to take him along to Russia and have him educated. In Russia Täklä-Hawaryat was adopted by Colonel Malihanoff, grandson of Prince Volhonsky, a Decembrist. He joined a small community of Ethiopian students, quite a few of whom succumbed to the harsh Russian winter: Täklä-Hawaryat cites in his memoirs the names of four of the victims. He joined the St Petersburg military school and, after being commissioned at the age of 21, the Michael Artillery School. His

⁹⁷ Del Boca, II: 499–500; Stella: 598.

⁹⁸ Stella: 600.

⁹⁹ Stella: 601; Rouaud: 193; the date given by Zeqargachäw (p. 32) for Afäwärq's death is 15 *Mäskäräm* 1939EC, i.e. 25 September 1946.

¹⁰⁰ This is what he himself computes in his unpublished autobiography: 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 3, 34, 40ff., 70ff., 90ff.

request to Czar Nicholas II to join the Russian Military Academy was rejected on the grounds that the institution was open only to Russian citizens; Täklä-Hawaryat's letter to Emperor Menilek to be allowed to change his nationality for three years elicited no response. He returned to Ethiopia after staying abroad for 11 years, during which he also made a trip to Italy, France and England.¹⁰²

In his unpublished autobiography, Täklä-Hawaryat pays glowing tribute to his stay in Russia as the most formative period of his life:

ለእሸትነት የደረሰኩት በሩሲያኖች (በመስኮቦች) አገር ውስጥ ነው። እዚያ የትምህርት
ፕሮግራም በትክክል መከተል ከቻልኩ በኋላ ከችኩልነት ወደ ትላላቅነትና
ከልጅነት ወደጉልላማሳነት እየተላለፍኩ የግብዝነት ጨርቁን ወረወርኩና በሰላማዊ
መንገድ እየተመራሁ ወደአውቀት ተጓዝኩ። ወደ ትዳር የሚወስደው ጉዳና
ተከፈተልኝ። በረሺያ በኖርኩበት ወቅት ውስጥ የምድራዊውን ኦር ግምቱን ለመረዳት
ተቻለኝ ወደአስተዋፅኦነት መርግሪነት ፈላስፋነት የተመራሁት የተግባርና አግባር
(*devoir et droit, duty and right*) ጠቃሚነት የነፃነትን ተወዳጅነት የዲሲፕሊንን
እስፈላጊነት የፕራንሲፕን መሰረተኝነት የተገነዘብኩት የተፈጥሮን ሀገ ለማጥናት
ችሎታ ያገኘሁት ከመዛባት ለመደን ተፈጥሮዬን ለማሻሻል መጣር የጀመርኩት ለሰራ
መበርታት ገደታም ውደታም መሆኑን ያወቅሁት በረሺያኖች መካከል ለመኖር
አጋጣሚ ከፈቀደልኝ በኋላ ነው።

I attained ripeness in Russia. There, through diligent application to education, I matured from impetuosity to patience, from childhood to adolescence, and cast away my garb of frivolousness and marched on the road to knowledge ... Thanks to the opportunity I had to live amidst the Russians, I developed the powers of perception and investigation; I came to realize the interplay of duty and right, the love for freedom, the need for discipline, and the essentialness of principle; I was able to study the law of nature, to cultivate my natural endowments, and to understand that diligence in work is a matter of both obligation and volition.¹⁰³

Yet Täklä-Hawaryat was to come to the painful realization that Ethiopia had no need for either his training in artillery or his skill in the Russian language. After spending some time in frustrating idleness, he decided to go to France to study agriculture. He was given some funds by the emperor to cover his expenses, but he had to supplement them by tutoring Russian children in Paris. He also stayed for some time in England; his visits to the British Museum remained the most memorable events of his stay in London.¹⁰⁴ His evaluation of Parisian life was as cautious as his assessment of his Russian experience was exuberant:

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: 119–23, 137–43, 165, 196–220; Heruy, *YäHəywätTarik*: 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: 37.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 261–75; Heruy, *YäHəywätTarik*: 31.

የፓሪስ ኑሮ ለጥቂት ጊዜ ጥሩ ነው ነገር ግን ብዙ ጊዜ ለመኖር ይታከታል ያሰለቻል።
... ከፍራንሲያኖች ጋራ ለውጥ በለውጥ እጅ በጅ መገበያየት ይቻላል። መፋቀር
ያቅታል እኒም ለውጥ በለውጥ እጅ በጅ እየተገበያየሁ ጊዜዬን በደህና አሳለናኩት
የፍራንሲያኖችም ባህሪ ካወቅሁት በኋላ ልቤን በሳጥን ውስጥ ከትኛ በሩሲያ በኩል
ወደሃገሪ አሳፈርኩት አለምሮጭንና እንደበቴን ከኔ ጋራ አስቀርኜ እያሰለጠንኳቸው
በነዚሁ ብቻ እየተገበያየሁ ደህና ተሰማምኜ ቆየሁ።

Life in Paris is good for a short while, but taxing for a longer period ... One can deal with Frenchmen on an exchange basis, but it is difficult to love them. I therefore learnt the rule of barter and whiled my time away in good shape. Once I came to know the French character, I packed up my heart and sent it home via Russia, kept back my head and my tongue, trained them and used them to deal with the French.¹⁰⁵

One important acquisition of his sojourn abroad was a collection of about 700 volumes, mostly on Ethiopian history. He had apparently planned to write a comprehensive history of Ethiopia,¹⁰⁶ but the books were confiscated by the Italians during the occupation.¹⁰⁶

His first administrative post was heading the Addis Ababa municipality under *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Mikaél, the de facto prime minister during the reign of Iyyasu (c. 1911–16). With the assistance of the French engineer, Chefneux, Täklä-Hawaryat developed a comprehensive plan for municipal reform, including a master cadastral survey, zonal divisions, street naming and house numbering, general sanitation and medical check-ups for prostitutes. Täklä-Hawaryat was found too enterprising and independent-minded and was dismissed. Haylä-Giyorgis is reported to have said: ‘What I want is a box that closes when it is closed and opens when it is opened. I have no need for someone like Täklä-Hawaryat who opens and closes of his own volition.’¹⁰⁷ He briefly assumed the post of comptroller of the railway, another favourite position occupied by the educated elite.¹⁰⁸

Täklä-Hawaryat also developed an interest in the young heir to Menilek, Iyyasu. Like Gäbrä-Heywät, he came to feel that there was a better chance for reform under the young prince than under the old emperor. Täklä-Hawaryat applied himself to the task of winning the favour of Iyyasu with such diligence that, briefly, he managed to dislodge such cronies of the prince as *Näggadras* Täsämma Eshäté and the Syrian Ydlibi. But Täklä-Hawaryat’s hopes for reform were dashed as Iyyasu showed himself to be lacking in seriousness of purpose and steadfastness of application. The last straw for Täklä-Hawaryat was apparently when he could not even get the young ruler to listen attentively to an administrative manual that he had painstakingly drafted. He then decided to shift allegiance in the growing confrontation between Iyyasu and the disgruntled Shāwan nobility and joined in the

¹⁰⁵ Autobiography: 273.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*: 341–4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: 370.

denunciation of Iyyasu as an apostate in September 1916, appearing as one of the witnesses to Iyyasu's conversion to Islam. He did not stop at that: following Iyyasu's deposition, he assumed command of the government force that defeated him at the railway town of Mieso, about midway between Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, as the young emperor rather belatedly rushed to the capital to reverse the decision.¹⁰⁹

Täklä-Hawaryat's relations with Iyyasu's de facto successor, Täfäri Mäkonnen, had an auspicious beginning as he was appointed governor of Jijjiga, a district within Täfäri's own hereditary fief of Harärge, in 1917. Täklä-Hawaryat was also given the traditional title of *fitawari*.¹¹⁰ Coming as it did in the wake of the deposition of Iyyasu, who had been held in high esteem among the Ogaden Somali, Täklä-Hawaryat's assignment must have been quite a delicate one. But it does not seem to have taken him long to win his way into the hearts of the Somali and he developed a reputation for enlightened administration. Täklä-Hawaryat was presumably chosen for the post because he had the requisite educational background as well as the drive to develop the district, which had been selected by Täfäri to serve as a model of modern administration.¹¹¹

Among Täklä-Hawaryat's major achievements were the building of a fort, drawing up administrative divisions, drafting a town plan, digging wells, the encouragement of agriculture (he himself setting the example), setting a fixed land tax and awarding prizes for high productivity. In addition, much of the credit for the transformation of Jijjiga from a garrison town to a modern urban centre goes to Täklä-Hawaryat.¹¹² The Somali population were presumably so gratified by the peace and progress that his governorship symbolized that they gave him the names of Sehiye ('Sleeping in Peace') and Tahir ('Light').¹¹³ A letter Täfäri sent Täklä-Hawaryat in 1918 suggests that the latter might even have toyed with the idea of mechanized agriculture.¹¹⁴ Another question that appears to have proved vexatious was disputes with British authorities over the undemarcated boundary between Ethiopia and British Somaliland.¹¹⁵ The digging of wells itself became closely intertwined with the assertion of administrative claims and the winning of Somali allegiance.¹¹⁶

It is not clear when Täklä-Hawaryat gave up or was removed from his Jijjiga post.¹¹⁷ He himself writes that he left the post because Täfäri kept

¹⁰⁹ Kābbādä Täsämma, *YäTarik Mastawäsha* (1962EC): 56. See also US 884.002/17, Southard to Sec. of St., 30.9.31.

¹¹⁰ Autobiography, II: 33–4; Heruy, *YäHeywätTarik*. Täklä-Hawaryat had initially been given the title of *qānnāzmach* and, whether to express his dissatisfaction at the low title or out of a general aversion for pomp or the traditional garb, he had refused to wear the ceremonial dress associated with that rank.

¹¹¹ Tibebe Eshete, 'A History of Jijjiga Town 1891–1974,' MA thesis (AAU, 1988): 47.

¹¹² *Ibid.*: 55–6.

¹¹³ Autobiography, II: 17, 36.

¹¹⁴ NL, Täfäri Letterbook, Täfäri to Täklä-Hawaryat, 29.10.10/6.7.18.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 28.1.11/8.10.18; 9.2.11/19.10.18; 19.2.11/29.10.18.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 30.3.11/9.12.18.

¹¹⁷ His unpublished autobiography, copiously detailed as it is on many issues, is very

reinstating people he had dismissed for inefficiency.¹¹⁸ After a few years of idleness, which Heruy considers as a hiatus between the Jijiga experiment and the chief assignment for which Täklä-Hawaryat was being groomed,¹¹⁹ he was appointed governor of Chärchär, in western Harär, one of the provinces that Täfäri was developing as a model of modern provincial administration, the others being Guma and Géra in southwestern Ethiopia.

As these administrative appointments reveal, Täfäri's relations with Täklä-Hawaryat had an air of ambivalence. Täfäri appeared to value Täklä-Hawaryat's enterprise and dedicated application to duty but to resent his strong sense of independence. Täklä-Hawaryat sums it up in the following words: 'He [Täfäri/Haylä-Sellasé] is not constant. First, he gives you free rein with angelic benevolence. Then he secretly creates all sorts of obstacles. That is his distinctive trait.'¹²⁰ None the less, Chärchär was to prove Täklä-Hawaryat's most durable posting. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the founding of the town that came to be known as Asäbä Täfäri. Built up in a short period of time, Asäbä Täfäri soon developed a reputation as one of the best planned towns in Ethiopia. Täklä-Hawaryat had preferred to retain the old local name of the site, Chero, or to name it after a nearby hill, Moti, but he was overruled by Täfäri, who wished to indulge in a first savouring of the personality cult that was to be one of the distinctive marks of his later life.¹²¹

Täklä-Hawaryat also introduced some reforms in the collection of the *zakat*, a local variation of the *asrat* (tithe), which he aimed eventually to abolish altogether. He also set up fixed and graduated land tax, put his military training to use by leading a military campaign to restore order among the Afar, and raised the tax on *chat* land with the objective of discouraging cultivation of that inebriating plant. The upshot of these measures was a dramatic increase in revenue: Täklä-Hawaryat gives the rather fantastic figure of a rise from less than 100 berr to over 200,000 berr. A significant proportion of this revenue found its way to the central government coffers, to finance such measures as military reorganization.¹²²

These heady days were bound to be terminated, however. Partly, problems arose from the inherent untenability of trying to create an island of modernity and progress in a sea of backwardness. For instance, Täklä-Hawaryat was forced to lift the duty on *chat* when he realized its futility unless similar measures were taken in the adjoining districts. Partly, problems were created by what he described as obstructionists sent from Addis Ababa. He was accused of self-enrichment and of failure to pray

¹¹⁷ (cont.) disappointing on chronology.

¹¹⁸ Autobiography, II: 38.

¹¹⁹ *YäHeywät Tarik*: 31. A passage in the Autobiography (II: 12–13) suggests that, like *Käntiba* Gäbru, he might have served meanwhile as a member of the advisory council set up following the dismissal of the ministers in 1918.

¹²⁰ Autobiography, II: 40.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*: 43–5.

¹²² *Ibid.*: 47–65.

during Easter week and fined 10,000 berr.¹²³ This was only the dress rehearsal for worse things to come. In 1928, in the wake of a Bolshevik scare that gripped Addis Ababa, Tāklā-Hawaryat, no doubt because of his early Russian connections, was arrested on charges of plotting with other Russians resident in the capital, who all happened to be actually refugees from the Bolshevik revolution themselves, or White Russians as they were popularly known. When these allegations proved difficult to substantiate, Tāklā-Hawaryat was none the less forced to spend some time in jail on charges of showing disrespect to Princess Mānān, Tāfāri's wife, by failing to greet her when she arrived at Dire Dawa railway station. Asked how he could afford to imprison such educated men as Tāklā-Hawaryat, Tāfāri is believed to have retorted: 'A person like him will prove impossible unless he is knocked on the head from time to time.'¹²⁴

Some two years later, Tāfāri, by then crowned emperor with the throne name of Haylā-Sellāsé, again found use for Tāklā-Hawaryat. He was given the task of drafting the first constitution that Ethiopia had known; it was promulgated in July 1931. The constitution appears to have been modelled very much on the Meiji constitution of 1889. And this is understandable, given the strong appeal that Meiji Japan had for the intellectuals under investigation. But the differences between the two constitutions, particularly in the spheres of civic liberties and the power of the legislature, are equally worthy of note and reflect the different levels of development of the two societies. Unfortunately, Tāklā-Hawaryat, though voluble on many other features of his life in his unpublished autobiography, does not tell us his main sources of inspiration when he drafted the constitution; he merely tells us that he used copies of the German, English [*sic*], Italian and Japanese constitutions provided him by the emperor to draft the constitution.¹²⁵

In September 1931, some three months after the promulgation of the constitution, Tāklā-Hawaryat attained the distinction of being the first foreign-educated Ethiopian to rise to ministerial level. He was given the traditional title of *bājéron*d (palace treasurer) and made minister of finance.¹²⁶ The American minister in Addis Ababa, E. Southard, was highly complimentary of Tāklā-Hawaryat's accomplishments in that office, writing that he served as minister of finance 'more efficiently than did any predecessor. His great native intelligence, firm character, and European education have, naturally, fitted him particularly well to serve as Minister of Finance in these days of the transition of Ethiopia from the old to a modern economic

¹²³ *Ibid.*: 68–74.

¹²⁴ Germachāw, in the introduction to Tāklā-Hawaryat's autobiography: 18–19.

¹²⁵ These points are discussed in greater detail in Bahru Zewde, 'The Concept of Japanization in the Intellectual History of Modern Ethiopia,' *Proceedings of the Fifth Seminar of the Department of History* (1990): 9–10, 15–17. See also US 884.011/4, Southard to Sec. of St., 13.7.31.

¹²⁶ BS, 17.9.31; US 884.002/17, Southard to Sec. of St., 30.9.31, describing Tāklā-Hawaryat as 'a man of the peasant class who has risen by superior intelligence and education' and as 'very independent and no respecter of [the] Ethiopian feudal nobility'.

organization.¹²⁷ But Tāklā-Hawaryat's term of office was brief, lasting barely a year. His first shock came with the discovery of a situation that is not altogether uncommon: the monthly salary of the ministry's cashier, who of necessity handled large sums of money, was the paltry sum of 50 berr; this, Tāklā-Hawaryat felt, was an open invitation to embezzlement. His assignment of E.A. Colson, the American financial adviser, and some other foreign employees of the ministry to draft regulations for the ministry was vitiated by the emperor's designation of a supervisory commission which could not even understand the recommendations. Nor were Tāklā-Hawaryat's efforts to draw a distinction between the public purse and the private accounts of the emperor calculated to endear him to the emperor, particularly when this involved the minister's refusal to reimburse the emperor for the 1930 coronation expenses. The practicality of such a step is itself subject to question, inasmuch as, by Tāklā-Hawaryat's own admission, the ministry's finances were in the hands of Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld, the emperor's trusted and loyal official, rather than in the ministry itself. Moreover, there were gross arrears in the repayment of government loans, Mohammedally, the famous Indian import-export firm, owing for example over 2 million berr.¹²⁸

Given the increasingly acrimonious relations with the palace, it is not much of a surprise that Tāklā-Hawaryat next found himself posted as Ethiopian minister to London, Paris and Geneva. Although, like Afäwārq before him and Wārqenäh after him, Tāklā-Hawaryat might have been chosen by the emperor because of his eminent qualifications,¹²⁹ the evidence is too strong for this being more a case of removing from centre stage a character who was too independent and self-willed for the emperor's taste. By this time Tāklā-Hawaryat had clearly earned notoriety for insubordination. Moreover, there was an inherent logic in the emperor, once he had consolidated his position vis-a-vis the traditional nobility, not having any further domestic need for a subordinate with Tāklā-Hawaryat's stubborn sense of independence. At any rate, Tāklā-Hawaryat remonstrated against his ambassadorial designation, blaming it on the intrigues of Heruy and *Ras* Kasa Haylu, but finally assumed the post with great reluctance.¹³⁰

Of Tāklā-Hawaryat's three postings, it was the one at the League of Nations in Geneva that soon came to occupy all of his attention. The Wälwäl incident in 1934 provoked what came to be known as the Abyssinian crisis at the League of Nations, and Tāklā-Hawaryat found himself at the centre of it. The hostility to his country that he encountered among the powers was enough to move this stalwart patriot to tears. In the end, however, the issue could only be resolved on the battlefields in

¹²⁷ US 701.8441/6, Southard to Sec. of St., 11.1.33.

¹²⁸ Autobiography, II: 103–18.

¹²⁹ I have suggested this as one of the possibilities in my discussion of the issue in my 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia and the Italo-Ethiopian War 1935–1941,' *IJAHS* (1993): 277–8.

¹³⁰ Autobiography, II: 120–3; MPA 335, Tāklā-Hawaryat to Haylä-Sellase, 30.4.25/9.11.32.

Ethiopia, not in the assembly halls in Geneva. Täklä-Hawaryat was perfectly aware of this and he hurried back home, only to discover that all was lost and the emperor, defeated and dispirited, was going into exile. Täklä-Hawaryat was one of those who strongly objected to this move. In the end, however, himself overwhelmed by the might of Fascist arms, he opted for exile. He first went to Djibouti. His request for an agricultural concession in the French colony was courteously rejected by the authorities.¹³¹ He then moved on to Aden, and finally to Madagascar.

On the liberation of Ethiopia and the restoration of the emperor to the throne in 1941, Täklä-Hawaryat still felt not sufficiently comfortable to return, and he later had to account for his tardiness in joining the chorus of jubilation at the emperor's return. When he finally returned, he retired to his old town of Hirna and to his abiding agricultural interests. He finally died in April 1977, aged over 90.¹³²

The self-educated

The term 'self-educated', inadequate as it may appear, is used here to describe the group of intellectuals who did not have formal education either in Ethiopia or abroad. Almost all of them started from a sound base in Ethiopian church education. Quite a few of them broadened their horizons through association with missionaries, Catholic or Protestant. This association was characterized by conversion (as in the case of *Aläqa Atsmä-Giyorgis*, to Catholicism), an attempt at a meaningful synthesis (as in that of *Aläqa Tayyä*), or reaffirmation of the Orthodox heritage (as in that of *Blattén Gêta Heruy*). *Blatta Gäbrä-Egziabher* Gila-Maryam, who also belongs to this group, had no known association with missionaries of any denomination.¹³³

Aläqa Atsmä-Giyorgis Gäbrä-Mäsih

Aläqa Atsmä-Giyorgis Gäbrä-Mäsih, or Atsmé, as he is more popularly known, was born at Arramba, near Ankobar, the capital of the Shäwan kingdom. His father was a learned *däbtära*. Atsmé obtained his education from various monasteries in Shäwa. But it was apparently neither his learned father nor these monasteries which left the greatest imprint on him. That came from a maternal relative, *Aläqa Täklä-Tseyon*, the famous leader of the Sost Ledät (Tsägga) party at the religious council of Boru Méda in 1878. The tone of that council, presided over by Emperor Yohannes to resolve the doctrinal controversies that had bedevilled the Ethiopian

¹³¹ MAE Affaires Politiques, Täklä-Hawaryat to Governor Annet, 11.12.36; MAE to Ministre des Colonies, 9.11.36.

¹³² Germachäw, Introduction to Autobiography: 38.

¹³³ The titles of these intellectuals – *aläqa*, *blattén gêta*, *blatta* – are themselves indicative of their high attainments in traditional education.

Orthodox church for centuries, was set from the beginning when the emperor, who was clearly on the side of the Hulät Ledät (Tāwahedo) party, referred to Tāklä-Tseyon as Tāklä-Leon, a scarcely veiled allusion to his Catholic leanings.¹³⁴

In the end, Emperor Yohannes did not prove too wide of the mark. Tāklä-Tseyon did embrace Catholicism. Unable to endure the harassment and persecution, however, he went first to Rome and then to Jerusalem, where he died. He had become so anathematized that his relatives in Shāwa could not mourn his death save by means of covert allusions at other funerals.¹³⁵ Instrumental in the conversion of both Tāklä-Tseyon and Atsmé was the Italian missionary, Cardinal Guglielmo Massaja, to whom both had been closely attached. Atsmé got not only his faith but also a knowledge of French and Latin from Massaja and his colleagues, just as growing up along the major trade route to and from the Gulf of Aden had reportedly introduced him to Arabic and Islam.¹³⁶

At any rate, Atsmé did not suffer the fate of his mentor, *Aläqa* Tāklä-Tseyon. Menilek found good use for him as he prepared to march on Harär. Thanks to his knowledge of Arabic, Atsmé was able to disguise himself in the walled city and gather intelligence which Menilek found useful for his campaign in 1886–7. The victorious conclusion of the campaign assured Atsmé's fortune with the newly appointed governor, *Däjjach* Mäkonnen, who was in any case well disposed to men of learning. Appointed judge and counsellor, Atsmé lived in Harär with all due honour. He established his fame, however, not so much as an administrator but as a historian of the Oromo and of Shāwa.¹³⁷ At the same time, his close association with Mäkonnen set the pattern for the even more intimate relationship that later developed between Mäkonnen's son, Täfäri, and the Catholic group, which will be discussed below.

Blatta Gäbrä-Egziabhér Gila-Maryam

Gäbrä-Egziabhér Gila-Maryam was born sometime in the early 1860s,¹³⁸ in the village of Tsa'da Krestiyān in Hamasén, Eritrea. He was educated at Däbrä Bizän, a famous monastery on the edge of the escarpment that

¹³⁴ Mängestu Lämman, *Mäshafä Tezeta ŽäAläqa Lämman Haylu Wäldä Tarik* (1959EC): 154. For Atsmé, see Bairu Tafla, ed., *Atsmä Giyorgis and His Work. History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Sawa* (1987): 63–6.

¹³⁵ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 32.

¹³⁶ Bairu, *Atsmä Giyorgis*: 63, 66; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*; G. Massaja, *Nella Scioa* (1897): 100–5. Massaja does not mention Atsmé, however, though he does cite *Aläqa Sahlé* ('Saheli'), a colleague of Tāklä-Tseyon, as another convert. See also Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 19.

¹³⁷ Bairu, *Atsmä Giyorgis*: 54–5; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 55.

¹³⁸ On the basis of Paul Mërab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie*, III (1929): 359, who met him in 1911 when he was about 50 years old. See also Tekeste Negash, 'Blatta Gebre Egziabeher Gila Mariam and His Works: A Sketch towards a Political Biography of a Nationalist', in *No Medicine for the Bite of a White Snake: Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890–1940* (1986): 2; Irma Taddia, *Un intellettuale tigrino nell'Etiopia di Menelik: Blatta Gäbrä Egzi'abher Gilay (1860–1914)* (1990): 9.

traced its origin to medieval times. When the Italians advanced to the highlands of the Mārāb Mellash in the wake of the death of Emperor Yohannes at the Battle of Mātāmma (March 1889), Gäbrä-Egziabhēr joined them as a clerk and interpreter. He continued to serve the Italians after they set up their colony of Eritrea, but his heart was on the other side of the Mārāb. Once armed confrontation between Ethiopia and Italy became imminent following the failure to resolve the controversy triggered by the conflicting Amharic and Italian versions of the Treaty of Wechälé, Gäbrä-Egziabhēr began to work surreptitiously but assiduously for the Ethiopian cause. He was thus instrumental in bringing about in late 1895 the defection from the Italian camp of the Tegréan princes, *Ras Sebhāt Arägawi* and *Däjjach Hagos Täfäri*.¹³⁹

After Adwa, he continued his links with the Ethiopian authorities as he accompanied missions to both Emperor Menilek and *Ras Mäkonnen*, when the latter was governor of Tegräy in 1898–9. In July 1899 Gäbrä-Egziabhēr was arrested after the Italians laid their hands on his correspondence. Evidence incriminating him and his close associate, *Kāntiba* Gila-Mikaél, was found in the coded letters they exchanged with Mäkonnen's secretary, *Ato Wäldä-Ammanuél*, and between themselves. Gila-Mikaél managed to escape across the border to Ethiopia, where he entered the service of Menilek as a telegraphist. Gäbrä-Egziabhēr was first detained in Naples, then moved to Nocera, off the port of Assab. In November 1899 he escaped from prison with some other prisoners after overpowering the guards. He joined Mäkonnen in Tegrä in 1900 and accompanied him when he returned to his Harär governorship in 1901.¹⁴⁰

Gäbrä-Egziabhēr could be viewed as someone who anticipated the unionist movement in Eritrea by more than four decades. He found it particularly galling that Menilek failed to consummate the Adwa victory by liberating Eritrea from Italian rule. He was therefore unsparing in his criticism of Menilek. This feeling of bitterness permeates his major work, which was written in 1897. At a time when the rest of Ethiopia was still relishing the Adwa victory, he could only see the country's humiliation and decline.¹⁴¹ This fact placed him in a position of ambivalence. His heart was with Ethiopia; but his disappointment with the Ethiopian leadership forced him to prefer the Italians. In his memoirs, he writes that when he was approached by *Ras Mäkonnen* on behalf of Menilek to come over to the service of the emperor, he said he would consider it only if Menilek introduced European technology.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ NL, *Aläqa* Tayyā Papers, Ms Autobiography of Gäbrä-Egziabhēr (incomplete): 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Tekeste: 2–7; IES Ms, Memoirs of *Kāntiba* Gila-Mikaél: 1–6; Taddia: 65, and especially Chapter II for his trial in Italy; ASMAI, Archivio Eritreo, Pacco 1008, Mercatelli to Governor of Eritrea, 22.7.99; Heruy, *YäHəywat Tarik*: 92.

¹⁴¹ IES Ms. No. 2171, 'Ze Mätshaf...Wäldu läGila Maryam zäTsa'da Krestyan Hamasén' ('Sue Memorie'), 1889EC: 1, 47, 56; Tekeste: 7–8. In his ms. autobiography: 2, Gäbrä-Egziabhēr in fact alleges that Menilek gave up the idea of recovering Eritrea after the Italians offered to pay an annual rent for it.

¹⁴² 'Ze Mätshaf': 58; see also ASMAI, Archivio Eritreo, Pacco 1008, Mercatelli to Governor

The Italians, by arresting him, made his choice very clear. His life in Ethiopia was not entirely a happy one, however. During his stay in Harär, he was imprisoned for stating in public that the earth revolves around the sun.¹⁴³ He moved to Addis Ababa, where he made a lasting name for himself by pioneering the Amharic press. He produced leaflets on the general theme of progress and the patriotic defence of the fatherland. But he continued to lead a life of disenchantment. A contributor to *Berhanena Sälam* writes in 1931 that, frustrated by the fact that his counsel to the Ethiopian authorities went unheeded, he had taken to drinking.¹⁴⁴ The physical incapacitation of Menilek after 1906 could not have helped matters, either.¹⁴⁵ Gäbrä-Egziabähr finally died in 1914, no doubt a thoroughly disillusioned person.¹⁴⁶

Aläqa Tayyä Gäbrä-Maryam

No less tragic was the fate of *Aläqa* Tayyä Gäbrä-Maryam, one of the pioneers of modern Ethiopian historiography. He was born in Qaroda, Bägémder, on 21 *Hedar* 1853/29 November 1860.¹⁴⁷ His father left the family for Harär in search of a better life and his mother, along with many other relatives, perished in an epidemic when Tayyä was aged 15. Four years later, Tayyä went to Tegré in search of an uncle, only to find out that he had moved on to India. Tayyä then proceeded to Massawa, apparently with the idea of going to Jerusalem. Unable to accomplish that objective, he retraced his steps back to Menkullu and joined the Swedish mission, the early haven of so many of the characters of this study, including Onésimos Näsib, whom Tayyä met. He stayed at Menkullu till 1898. For about four years between 1882 and 1885, however, he returned to Bägémder, studied *qené* and attained the title of *aläqa*. While at Menkullu, he taught Amharic and Ge'ez and wrote a grammar manual and a dictionary.¹⁴⁸

His first years after his final return to Bägémder gave no intimation of the troubles that lay ahead. He earned the respect of his countrymen, including the local governor, *Ras* Mängäsha Atikäm, for his learning. After

¹⁴² (cont.) of Eritrea 22.7.99, and Wärgenäh Diary: 400, where Wärgenäh writes that Gäbrä-Egziabähr 'came over & read to me a part of his book wh he has written about Abyssinian backwardness', adding: 'He is very intelligent & knows Amharic Geez Arabic & Italian very well.'

¹⁴³ Mérab, III: 359; Albert Gérard, 'Amharic Creative Literature: The Early Phase,' *JES* (1968): 40. Gäbrä-Heywät, too, alludes to this incident, although he does not cite Gäbrä-Egziabähr by name: 'Até Menilek': 344.

¹⁴⁴ *BS*, 31.12.31.

¹⁴⁵ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 92.

¹⁴⁶ Tekeste: 2.

¹⁴⁷ According to a manuscript by Mängestu Tayyä, adopted son of the *aläqa*, *aläqa* Tayyä Papers, Ethiopian Language Academy, NL: 1; Tadesse Tamrat, in his preface to Tayyä's *YäItyoṗya Hezb Tarik* (1964EC): 9; Aren: 287. Haylu Kābbādä, 'YäAläqa Tayyä Gäbrä-Maryam YäHeywät Tarik,' BA thesis (HSIU, 1963EC): 1, writes that Tayyä was born in Kāmkām *wäräda* and gives an alternative date of 1850EC (1857/8) on the basis of oral information from Mängestu and an *Addis Zāmān* article of 1969.

¹⁴⁸ Mängestu: 1–3; Aren: 287–8, 294, 433; Haylu: 2; Heruy: 37.

an audience with Emperor Menilek in November 1898, Tayyā returned with an imperial writ certifying to his orthodoxy: ‘As we have examined his faith [and found it to be correct], no one should dispute him on affairs of religion.’¹⁴⁹

The opportunity to go abroad that had eluded Tayyā in 1879 finally arrived in 1905. The German mission led by Felix Rosen which arrived in Ethiopia in that year asked of Menilek the loan of an Ethiopian scholar to teach Amharic and Ge’ez at Berlin University. Menilek chose Tayyā as the person who perfectly blended traditional Ethiopian education and European ways. Tayyā kept a diary of his journey, which took him to Sweden and Constantinople as well, recording among other things his impressions of the ‘shameless prostitutes of Marseilles and the trams and statues of Berlin’. In Berlin, he was closely associated with and proved of great benefit to the noted Ethiopicist, Dr Eugen Mittwoch, recalling the association some three centuries earlier of the German scholar, Hiob Ludolf, and his Ethiopian informant, Abba Gorgorios.¹⁵⁰

Tayyā returned to Ethiopia in January 1908, bringing along some of the 133 manuscripts that he had identified as having been taken to Germany over the years and the decorations with which he had been honoured by the German, Italian and Greek governments. Menilek, too, decorated him for the successful accomplishment of the mission he had been entrusted with, granted him *gult* in his native area, and commissioned him to write the history of Ethiopia.¹⁵¹

But Tayyā fell foul of the local governor, *Däjjach* Mäshäsha Wärqé. It is ironical that Tayyā’s career, which had begun so auspiciously, should have been thwarted by someone like Mäshäsha Wärqé, who had himself been exposed to the outside world and should therefore have been supportive, or at the very least understanding, of Tayyā. The two had also been linked in the Ethiopian official delegation, headed by Mäshäsha, which Tayyā had joined in Constantinople. At any rate, Mäshäsha, who presumably coveted Tayyā’s *gult*, disputed Tayyā’s rights to it on the grounds of his heterodoxy. He cast at him the dreaded label of ‘*Isäwä Maryam*’ and cannily challenged him to bow to the picture of Mary. Tayyā declined, saying that the holy book prescribes bowing only to God, not to representations. Understandably, this created a furore in a theological tradition which had given pride of place to Mary. The matter was brought to the attention of *Ras* Wäldä-Giyorgis, the governor of Bägēmdēr, who

¹⁴⁹ Mängestu: 4–6.

¹⁵⁰ Mängestu: 7–8; Tadesse, preface to Tayyā: 17–18; Rosen: 265; Haylu: 13–14; Heruy, *YäHeywätTarik*: 37. Somewhat courteously, Tayyā confided to Mittwoch that, of all the places he visited, there was no country to compare with Germany and no city to compare with Berlin: Tayyā to Mittwoch, Constantinople, 21.12.07, in E. Ullendorff, ‘Some Early Amharic Letters,’ *BSOAS*, (1972); see also IFP, Tayyā to Ilg, 8.10.1899/15.6.07. But his relations with his cantankerous landlord in Berlin were anything but cordial, as can be seen from his fairly long and anguished report, in Ullendorff, ‘Some Early Amharic Letters,’: 440–7.

¹⁵¹ Mängestu: 9–12; Haylu: 22; Heruy: 37.

put Tayyā in chains in December 1910 and sent him to Addis Ababa.¹⁵²

Tayyā's trial in the capital drew a large crowd and turned into a classic confrontation between bigotry and independence of spirit. His main accusers were *Echāgé* Wäldä-Giyorgis and *Ras* Wälé Betul. The Egyptian archbishop, *Abunä* Mattēwos, too, joined the fray. He is reported to have questioned Tayyā abusively: 'What is your religion, you donkey?' To which Tayyā is said to have replied coolly: 'No wonder we are called donkeys, because we have been stupid enough to accept you as our archbishop.'¹⁵³ *Ras* Wälé was equally scurrilous. When Tayyā politely reminded Wälé that his domain was the administration of justice, the throwing of banquets and the waging of wars, and not religious affairs, Wälé felt slighted and shouted at him: 'You heretic!'¹⁵⁴

The main charges levelled against Tayyā were that he disputed the intercession of saints, that he refused to prostrate himself in front of representations, that he claimed that one can attain divine grace through good deeds only while alive and not through commemorative feasts like *tāzkar* organized in one's name after death, that he held fasting to be of no value if not attended by abstinence from sinful acts, and that he rejected the observance of the sabbath. Tayyā defended himself eloquently, basing his arguments on the Scriptures. But this did not save him from jail, where he was kept in chains for 26 days. The persecution that he was subjected to made him all the more determined to persist in his beliefs. Not only did he keep up his spirits by composing poems but he also won over some of the inmates to his convictions. After being released from jail, he was put under house arrest under the custody of *Dājjach* Mulugéta and *Dājjach* Yeggāzu. He regained full liberty only some six years later, in 1916.¹⁵⁵

After his rehabilitation, he was told to resume his work on the history of Ethiopia. In 1920 he was appointed member of the advisory council set up after the dismissal of the ministers in 1918. His projected *magnum opus* did not see the light of day, however. He died on 21 August 1924.¹⁵⁶ The funeral dirge of a lady said to be his sister summed up his life of struggle against prejudice and ignorance:

¹⁵² Māngestu: 13–14; 'Māqdem ZeTarik ZāAlāqa Tayyā,' Tayyā Papers: 1; Mérab, III: 335; Tayyā to Mittwoch, 2.10.03/9.6.11, in Ullendorff, 'Some Early Amharic Letters,' 266–7.

¹⁵³ Haylu: 3. Tayyā was alluding to the fact that for centuries the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox church had been appointed from Egypt and often did not even understand Amharic or any other Ethiopian language.

¹⁵⁴ 'Māqdem ZāTarik': 33.

¹⁵⁵ Māngestu: 15–21.

¹⁵⁶ Māngestu: 21–3. Māngestu claims (pp. 49–61) that Tayyā had actually completed the manuscript but that it found its way into Heruy's hands after Tayyā's death and was published under Heruy's name as *Wazēma*, an abridged prelude to the projected history of Ethiopia. Māngestu seems unaware of the fact that, after *Wazēma*, Heruy had in fact managed to write the bigger history; this was in press when the Italians invaded Ethiopia and portions of the galley proofs have survived. His German friend from Berlin days, Jensen, wrote in 1920 of the slight recognition that Tayyā's historical work (presumably *YāItyoṗya Hezb Tarik*) received and the ineffectual nature of his post in the advisory council: Jensen to Mittwoch, 5.5.20, in Edward Ullendorff, *From Emperor Haile Selassie to H.J. Polotsky. An Ethiopian and Semitic Miscellany* (1995): 66.

The First Generation

ከወገኒ ቤት አሥረው የዘጉበት ሣንቃ
ብሎ ተናግሮ ነው የወንጌል ቃል ይብቃ
የወንጌልን ሥርዓት ተማሩ ቢላቸው
ትልቁም ትንሹም ሁሉም ደደብ ናቸው
አሉት ፀረ ማርያም መልስ ቢላናቸው

ዕውቀትና ምግባር ጉድጓድ ተከተተ
አራት ነው አንጂ መች አንድ ሰው ሞተ
ወዝውዘው ነዝነዘው ጣሉት እንደዝሆን
ያው ወደቀላቸው ይበሉት እንደሆነ።

They shut him up in prison
Merely because he said the Bible is the final word;
The small and big are all ignoramuses;
For when he told them to learn the Bible,
They labelled him *Tsärrä Maryam* for lack of an answer.

All that knowledge and character has gone to dust;
It is four persons who have died, not one.
There he is, fallen like a harried elephant,
They can, if they so wish, go ahead and eat him up.¹⁵⁷

Blattén Géta *Heruy Wäldä-Selläsé*

In contrast to the troubled life of Tayyā, the career of Blattén Géta Heruy Wäldä-Selläsé stands out as the great success story in this saga of the early twentieth-century intellectuals. His prolific literary record, his influence with Täfäri-Haylä-Selläsé and his ascent in the bureaucratic hierarchy were all characterized by an unchecked progression. Born in Mänz on 1 *Genbot* 1870/8 May 1878,¹⁵⁸ he was given the name of Gäbrä-Mäsqäl. He went through the initial stages of traditional church education first in the local parish, Dänn Abbo, then at Seré Mädhane Alām in Sälalé, where his father had taken him. Soon, however, he fell on hard times. His father died when he was 13. Furthermore, the discontinuance during the great famine (1888–92) of the financial assistance he had been receiving from *Wäyzäro* Tsähaywärg Dargé, cousin of Emperor Menilek and *gäbāz* of the parish, placed the young boy in dire straits. He weathered the stress by serving as

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Haylu: 30.

¹⁵⁸ Salvatore Tedeschi, 'La carrière et les idées de Heruy Wäldä-Sellasié (1878–1938)', in *Trois essais sur la littérature éthiopienne* (1984): 41, and Asfa-Wossen Asserate, *Die Geschichte von Sawä (Äthiopien) 1700–1865* (1980): 2. Although Lämna Wäldä-Maryam, 'YäBlattén Géta Heruy Wäldä-Selläsé Heywät Tarik 1871–1931', BA thesis (HSIU, 1963EC): 2, gives the date 1 *Genbot* 1871 (i.e. 8 May 1879), he later unwittingly confirms the earlier date by stating that Heruy was 25 years old when he married in 1895EC. See Ullendorff, 'Some Early Amharic Letters': 232, for Heruy's own version, which confirms the date 1 *Genbot* 1870.

deacon to a big landlord for food and clothing. Later he supplemented his income through farming on a plot of land that he had obtained from the landlord and fees that he collected as a scribe to the local community.¹⁵⁹

Gäbrä-Mäsqäl's initiation into the bureaucratic hierarchy came with his appointment as clerk to *Däjjach* Bāshah Abboyé, the governor of Sälalé. He then moved into the service of *Qāññāzmach* Mäqrāch, a retainer of Ras Mäkonnen and governor of the district of Limmo. The latter appointment was significant not so much in terms of elevation in status as in bringing Gäbrä-Mäsqäl into contact with the priests of Entotto Raguél as they came to visit their lands in the district. These contacts rekindled his desire for learning. He joined the Raguél school and studied *qené* and *tergwamé* (interpretation of the Scriptures). His mentor was *Māmher* Wäldä-Giyorgis of Gondär, one of the more famous teachers of Raguél. The admiration must have been reciprocal, for it was Wäldä-Giyorgis who gave Gäbrä-Mäsqäl the name by which he was to become so famous, Heruy (whose meaning is 'precious').¹⁶⁰

While in Raguél, Heruy caught the attention of *Tsähafé Te'ezaz* Gäbrä-Sellásé Wäldä-Aragay, the imperial scribe and chronicler and the *aläqa* of Raguél. Impressed by Heruy's *qené* and *shebshäba* (ecclesiastical dancing), Gäbrä-Sellásé decorated Heruy, set aside for him an annual subsidy and gave him remunerative assignments connected with the administration of the church. In May 1903 Heruy married Hamärä Eshäté. They had four daughters and two sons. The sons, Fäqadä-Sellásé (alias George) and Sirak, born in 1907/8 and 1910/11 respectively, were to have a place in the intellectual history of Ethiopia in their own right and their story will be told in due course.¹⁶¹

It was about this time, too, that Heruy began his association with foreigners that was to give his life and works a unique blend of the traditional and the modern. He began learning English at the Swedish mission school in Addis Ababa. He was later forced to stop this in the face of strong rumours that he had turned Catholic.¹⁶² Likewise, he gave up the lessons in Arabic that he had been taking because of similar rumours that he had turned Muslim. He was provided with an opportunity to pick up French when he was assigned by the government to work with a French veterinary team. He also helped *Hakim* Wärqenäh translate his geography book from English to Amharic, thereby improving his knowledge of both the English language and world geography.¹⁶³

A much more direct acquaintance with the outside world was to come

¹⁵⁹ Lämma: 2–5; Asfa-Wossen: 4–5.

¹⁶⁰ Lämma: 5–8; Asfa-Wossen: 5–6.

¹⁶¹ Lämma: 14; Tedeschi: 41.

¹⁶² In the poisoned atmosphere in which such rumours were circulating, few people would bother to note that the Swedish missionaries with whom Heruy was associating were Protestant rather than Catholic. In any case, as long as one was accused of abandoning the Orthodox faith, it mattered little which Western denomination one joined. In that sense, 'Catholic' is a generic label conjuring up heterodoxy or, even worse, apostasy.

¹⁶³ Lämma: 15–20; Asfa-Wossen: 6.

in 1910 when Heruy accompanied *Däjjach* (later *Ras*) Kasa Haylu to the coronation ceremony of King George V in England. On the return trip, he had a chance to visit Paris, Rome, Alexandria, Cairo and Jerusalem.¹⁶⁴ This was to prove only the first of a series of trips that Heruy was to make in the course of his career.¹⁶⁵ In 1919 he was a member of the official mission headed by *Däjjach* Nadäw (and including *Käntiba* Gäbru) sent to England and the United States to congratulate the Allied powers on their victory. In 1920 and 1923, he visited Jerusalem twice, first on the vexed question of the Ethiopian monastery (Der Sultan) and the second time accompanying Princess Mänän, wife of the heir to the throne, *Ras* Täfäri. He followed up his second trip with visits to Hungary, Germany, Switzerland and France. In 1924, he was a member of the delegation that accompanied *Ras* Täfäri on his historic tour of Europe. Finally, in November 1931, came his memorable trip to Japan.¹⁶⁶

Parallel with this frequent exposure was his ascent in the government hierarchy. He started with the Addis Ababa municipality, where he was made a secretary in 1914/15, under the patronage of the all-powerful *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Mikaél, the de facto prime minister during the reign of Iyyasu. In 1916 he shifted his allegiance to Täfäri, though apparently not with the alacrity of his fellow intellectuals like Tāklä-Hawaryat. Heruy was appointed director-general of the municipality, where he is reputed to have laid the foundations for modern municipal administration. He also served as acting mayor in the years 1919–21.¹⁶⁷ In 1921 he was given the title of *blatta* and appointed chief judge of the special court set up to adjudicate cases involving expatriates and nationals. His next major appointment came in 1927 when he was made director-general in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the title of *blattén gēta*. Finally, on 19 April 1931, he was elevated to the post of minister of foreign affairs, which post he was to occupy until the Italian invasion in 1935–6.¹⁶⁸ His years of distinguished service as well as his literary works won him international recognition when he was made honorary member of the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft) in 1929.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Heruy's autobiographical note, in Ullendorff, 'Some Early Amharic Letters': 234.

¹⁶⁵ Characteristically, Heruy kept a diary of his trip, which was in many ways an eye-opener for him. A copy of this is currently in the custody of Dr Asfa Wossen Asserate in Frankfurt.

¹⁶⁶ Lämmä: 20, 25, 27–30; Asfa-Wossen: 7–9; FO 371/1043, Rodd to Grey, 22.7.11; US 884.002/5, Park to Sec. of St., 26.10.27. With indefatigable energy and an uncommon reverence for detail, Heruy almost invariably wrote accounts of his travels. These include: *BäEdmé Mäqoyyät Hulun LāMayät* (1926EC), a general resumé of his travels; *YäLe'elt Wäyzäro Mänan Mängäd Bäyyärusalēm-na BäMeser* (1916C), an account of Princess Manan's Jerusalem trip; *Dästa-na Kēber* (1916EC), the story of the 1924 tour of Europe with *Ras* Täfäri; and *Mahdärä Berhan Hagärä Japan* (1924EC), a description of his exciting trip to the Land of the Rising Sun.

¹⁶⁷ Eshetu Assen, 'History of the Municipality of Addis Ababa 1910–1941', BA thesis (AAU, 1986): 25–8.

¹⁶⁸ Lämmä: 25, 27–8, 32–3; Asfa-Wossen: 7–9; BS, 25.8.27, 23.4.31; Tedeschi: 41–2; US 884.002/5, Park to Sec. of St., 26.10.27.

¹⁶⁹ BS, 30.5.29. Awarding him an honorary Doctor of Letters by the prestigious Tübingen University was considered but rejected by the veteran Ethiopist, Prof. Enno Littmann: AA/R77860, letter of 25.7.28.

The First Generation

When Emperor Haylä-Sellasé left the capital to lead the war on the northern front, Heruy was left behind to maintain links with the outside world in cooperation with the American financial adviser, E.A. Colson. After the Ethiopian defeat at the Battle of Maychäw, the emperor returned to Addis Ababa and held an imperial council to determine his future conduct. Heruy's is said to have been one of the three dissenting voices (the two others being those of *Blatta* Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat and *Däjjach* Yeggäzu BâHabté) when it was decided that the emperor should seek exile rather than try to lead the resistance against the victorious Italians. Heruy accompanied the emperor into exile, however. He is reported to have taught for some time Amharic and Ge'ez at the London School of Oriental Studies (the future School of Oriental and African Studies).¹⁷⁰ His health, which had always been rather on the frail side, finally failed him and he died in Bath in southwest England on 19 September 1938. The emperor felt so bereaved that in his funeral oration he eschewed the royal 'We' that he had assumed since 1928 and delivered the address in the first person singular. 'My servant and my friend, Heruy,' the emperor said, 'if I fail to proclaim your greatness at this moment when you are parting after you have duly accomplished for your country all that is within your power, your works will put me to shame.' In 1947 Heruy's remains were exhumed and reburied at the Trinity cathedral in Addis Ababa.¹⁷¹

The Däbtara

Heruy epitomizes the *däbtära* element in Ethiopian intellectual history at its most successful. His *alma mater*, Raguél, was to produce a number of other graduates who came to exert a much more preponderant influence in the political life of the country than the foreign-educated intellectuals. Täfäri, while both heir to the throne and Emperor Haylä-Sellasé, felt more comfortable with these products of the traditional educational process than with those educated abroad. This affinity emanated not only from the similarity of Täfäri's educational formation but also from the greater readiness of the *däbtära* to defer to his authority – with the singular exception of Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat in the period after 1941.

One of the *däbtära* who was to win the high esteem of Haylä-Sellasé was *Märi Géta* Yoftahé Negusé. After graduating from Raguél he was employed as a teacher of Amharic and Ge'ez at Täfäri Mäkonnen School. He soon started to make a nationwide impact as Ethiopia's first modern playwright. His most famous play, *Afajäsheñ*, was started on the eve of the Italian invasion and completed during the author's exile in the Sudan. It is an allegorical piece presaging and portraying the Fascist invasion. After eluding the Italians, who were after him, in the summer of 1936, he

¹⁷⁰ Heruy turned to Eugen Mittwoch, the German orientalist who had been an old friend of both Heruy and Tayyā, for books on Amharic and Ge'ez grammar: Heruy to Mittwoch, 2.11.36.

¹⁷¹ *Feré Kānafer ZāQādamawi Haylä-Sellasé* (1944EC): 152; Lämama: 68; Asfa-Wossen: 10–11; Tedeschi: 69–74.

managed to escape to the Sudan, where he remained in exile during the period of occupation. He was in constant touch with both the emperor and his private secretary, Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes (the future *tsähafē te'ezaz*). While continuing his literary endeavours, producing two other plays (*Däbrä Tseyon* and *Amätä Mehrät*), he also served as liaison between the emperor in exile and the patriots in Ethiopia, more specifically those in Gojjam and Bägëmdër. He returned to Ethiopia after liberation and died in July 1947, a rather frustrated and schizophrenic man not at all happy with the way the *banda* (as the collaborators during the Italian occupation were known) were being allowed to enjoy the fruits of liberation.¹⁷²

Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld and Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat, who were to emerge in contrasting ways as dominant personalities of the political scene after 1941, also started as students of Raguél. They were deacons when they were selected to serve in the palace in the last days of Emperor Menilek. They grew into diametrically opposed personalities: Mäkonnen quiet and calculating, Takkälä incorrigibly outspoken. Täfäri, when he came to power, found use for both. Mäkonnen occupied various directorial posts before the war: agriculture, finance and commerce. He was also one of the principal founders of Yagär Feger Mahbär, the patriotic association established on the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian war to rally Ethiopians to the defence of the imperilled motherland.¹⁷³ He spent the period of Italian occupation in exile in France. After liberation he continued to occupy various ministerial posts until killed during the abortive coup of 1960.

Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat started as customs director in western Ethiopia and was director of the Addis Ababa municipality during the outbreak of the war. Haylä-Sellasé's decision to flee the country, which Takkälä-Hawaryat vehemently opposed, changed him from a loyal servant to an implacable opponent, a change which became dramatically evident particularly after the restoration of the emperor to the throne in 1941.¹⁷⁴

Blatta Dérëssa Amänté

Blatta Dérëssa Amänté stands out as a rather solitary figure, as he does not fit in into any of the categories adopted in this study. He neither went abroad for his studies nor attended any of the celebrated educational institutions, traditional or modern, in the country. He was a member of the

¹⁷² Mulugéta Seyum, 'YäQāñ Géta Yoſtahé Negusé YäHeywät Tarik,' BA thesis (HSIU, 1964EC); Yoſtahé Negusé, 'Afajäsheñ,' typescript at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (1965EC); Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 287–9, 295.

¹⁷³ Indeed, Mäkonnen continued to dominate the activities of the association after its reconstitution in 1941, in effect converting it into his personal platform for haranguing the populace on patriotic values. He remained patron of the association (later renamed Hagär Feger Téater) until his death in the wake of the abortive coup of 1960. For a history of the association, see Kiros Gebregziabher, 'The Origin and Historical Development of Hager Fikir Theatre up to 1974,' BA thesis (AAU, 1983).

¹⁷⁴ Berhanu Denqé, 'Qésar-na Abyot': 31–3, and, for general information on Raguél, Berhanu's own *alma mater*: pp. 12–17; Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 273–4, 283; US 884.002/9, Southard to Sec. of St., 5.7.30; Zervos: 149.

Léqa Nāqāmté aristocracy, being a cousin of the local ruler, *Däjjach* Kumsa (Gäbrä-Egziabhér) Moroda. In the 1920s he emerged as perhaps the most prolific contributor to the weekly forum of the educated elite, *Berhanena Sälam*. Interestingly, Déréssa combined intellectual pursuits with an exceptional entrepreneurial drive. His business interests included a mining concession that he acquired and exploited in southwestern Wälläga jointly with *Hakim* Wärgenäh, a soap factory, and truck transport in Addis Ababa. In 1930 he was given the rank of *blatta* (having been a *filaawrari* until then) and made director in the Ministry of Agriculture. In exile in the Sudan during the Italian occupation, he is reputed to have given further expression to his business-mindedness by opening bars. After 1941, *Blatta* Déréssa developed a reputation as an Oromo oral historian.¹⁷⁵

The graduates of Menilek II School

There was much in common between the self-educated intellectuals like Heruy (discussed above) and the graduates of the first modern school established by the Ethiopian state in 1908, Menilek II School. By virtue of the limited nature of their exposure to the outside world, both groups experienced less social alienation and enjoyed greater confidence among the authorities than their foreign-educated colleagues. The two persons who perfectly epitomize this parallel are Heruy Wäldä-Selläsé and Sahlé Tsädalü, both of whom rose to the rank of *Blattén Géta*.

Blattén Géta Sahlé Tsädalü

Blattén Géta Sahlé Tsädalü was born in Ankobär on 30 June 1887. His father, a native of Semén, had left his home area because of doctrinal disagreements with his kin and had come to settle in Shäwa. Sahlé became a deacon in a parish that came under the jurisdiction of *Abumä* Mattéwos, the Ethiopian archbishop, and studied *degwa*, *tswomä degwa* and *gené*. In 1903/4, following the death of his father, Sahlé came to Addis Ababa and entered government service, being assigned first as secretary to *Näggadras* Särtsä-Wäld, chief of customs in Wälläga, and then to the newly established Ministry of Pen. He was past 20 years old when he became one of the first 80 students to enrol in the newly opened Menilek II School. Following his graduation in 1911, he served as assistant and interpreter to a French physician of *Lej* Iyyasu. On the departure of the physician after the outbreak of the first world war, Sahlé became secretary and interpreter to the French engineers in the Addis Ababa municipality.¹⁷⁶

His initiation into the higher echelons of the government bureaucracy

¹⁷⁵ *BS*, 16.12.26, 26.6.30; Haylä-Selläsé Letterbook, NL: 77; Bahru Zewde, 'Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898–1935', PhD thesis (University of London, 1976): 421; Mulugéta: 55; oral informant Sebhātu.

¹⁷⁶ *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädalü Obituary (1963EC): 1–2.

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came with his appointment as secretary-general in the Foreign Ministry in the last days of Iyyasu. He continued in this post until 1927/8. During this long tenure, he is credited with initiating the creation of the special court to adjudicate cases involving expatriates and nationals, the issuance of passport regulations and the erection of a building to house the Foreign Ministry. In 1928 he became director in the Ministry of Education, assuming the full ministerial post in 1932. After the opening of parliament following the promulgation of the 1931 constitution, Sahlé doubled as vice-president of the senate. Like Heruy, though on a more modest scale, Sahlé was entrusted with a number of missions abroad. Of these, perhaps the most significant was his one-year-long stay in France in 1919/20 on a commercial mission. In 1924 he was sent to France, England and Belgium in advance of and to make arrangements for *Ras Täfäri* and his party during the historic tour of Europe. In 1929 he led the Ethiopian delegation to Egypt to negotiate the first ever consecration of Ethiopian bishops. In view of the imperial trust that he had thus managed to win, he had apparently expected to accompany the emperor into exile in 1936 and felt let down when he was left behind. He thus seemed to have more or less condoned the Italian occupation. But he was not spared the massive internment that attended the attempt on the life of Graziani in February 1937. He remained in Italy until 1940. He never managed to retrieve his prewar favour after 1941; he died in April 1971.¹⁷⁷

The Zamanuél brothers

Among the most colourful of the first-generation intellectuals were the two brothers Wäsäné and Näsibu Zamanuél. *Azazh* Zamanuél Wäldä-Malakot, whose name they came to bear, was actually their maternal grandfather rather than their father.¹⁷⁸ A noted courtier of Menilek and Taytu, Zamanuél introduced his grandsons to the imperial court. When the Menilek II School was opened, they were natural candidates. Wäsäné, the elder of the two, led a brief but eventful life. Through contacts with foreigners even more than through the formal education that he received, he developed a broad and progressive outlook. He was successively appointed chief of posts, telegraphs and telephones, Ethiopian consul in Asmara in 1915 and mayor of Addis Ababa in 1917/18. He succumbed to the influenza epidemic that attacked the city in 1918, when he was still under thirty. His death at such a tender age was universally lamented, not

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 2–11; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 19; *BS*, 15. 11.28; US 884.01/2, Park to Sec. of St., 17.3.27; US 884.002/18, Southard to Sec. of St., 15.3.32; oral informant Täsfayé Bäfaqadu; FO 371/9989, Täfäri to Macdonald, 5.4.24; Russell to FO, 16.4.24. For Sahlé's excellent command of French, see Maurice Lachin and D. Welichew, *L'Ethiopie et son destin* (1935): 51.

¹⁷⁸ According to Gulelat, 'YäKäntiba Näsibu Zamanél Tarik', IES Ms. 216: 2. However, Mahtämä-Sellásé, probably deductively, describes Wäsäné as the son of Zamanuél: *Ché Baläw*: 72.

least by the Catholics in Alitiéna, eastern Tegray, whom he had protected against the harassments of *Ras Seyum Mängäsha* of Tegray.¹⁷⁹ Täfäri apparently held Wäsäné very close to his heart, as can be gleaned from a letter of intercession he wrote on his behalf to André Jarosseau, who had felt slighted by Wäsäné's conduct.¹⁸⁰

Interestingly enough, Näsibu's early career closely replicated his brother's. He was both consul in Asmara and mayor of Addis Ababa. In the latter capacity, however, Näsibu had a much longer tenure (1922–32) and a more profound impact. The epithet of reforming mayor that Eshetu Assen attributes to him is not too wide of the mark. Some of the municipal reforms attributed to his mayorship are: the registration and categorization of urban land, the institution of traffic police and sanitation guards, a ban on the custom of firing shots during festivities, the proscription of the capricious system of *léba shay*, the burying of the bodies of dead animals, road-building, granting loans to people building houses along the main roads so that the constructions would add to the beauty of the city, the institution of night guards to curb mugging and the municipal certification of contracts.¹⁸¹ In 1929, after a period of medical treatment in Paris, he visited Berlin, when he made investigations about the introduction of a water supply system in Addis Ababa.¹⁸² Being in command of the municipal police, a unit which was the first to be organized along modern lines, Näsibu played a key role in the political power struggle of 1928, intervening decisively on the side of *Ras Täfäri*, first against *Däjjach* Balcha and then against *Däjjach* Abba Weqaw. His last major activity as mayor was the beautification of the capital for the coronation ceremony of his patron in November 1930. Thereafter, Näsibu was made director in the Ministry of War with the title of *däjjazmach* and, consecutively, governor of Balé and Harär. On the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war, he was given overall command of the Ethiopian forces on the southeastern front. After the collapse of the Ethiopian army, Näsibu went into exile in Switzerland, where he died in October 1936.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 75; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Ché Bäläw*: 72; MAE, GUERRE 1618, Brice to Declasse, 14.7.15; FO 371/3496, Campbell to Balfour, 11.12.18; Lazarist Mission Archives, Paris, *Annales*, 1919: 242–6, where the head of the mission, M. Gruson, wrote on 29.12.18: 'Ce n'est pas un malheur ordinaire, c'est un désastre!... L'Ethiopie a perdu un des fils qui lui faisaient le plus d'honneur, un homme sur lequel, en toutes circonstances, elle pouvait compter.'

¹⁸⁰ Capuchin Archives 2R 291, Täfäri to Jarosseau, 12.2.11/22.10.18, i.e. a few weeks before Wäsäné's death.

¹⁸¹ Eshetu Assen: 29–34.

¹⁸² AA/R77860, AA to Magistrat der Stadt Berlin, 15.10.29.

¹⁸³ Gulelat: 11–22; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 41; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Ché Bäläw*: 49; Eshetu Assen: 25–7; Haylä-Sellasé, *Heywaté-na YäItyohya Ermeja*, II (1966EC): 36; BS, 26.6.30; FO 371/10877, enclosure in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25; US 884.002/13, Southard to Sec. of St., describing Näsibu as 'one of the ablest of the young Ethiopians' and his religion unequivocally as Catholic.

Mäkonnen Endalkachäw

Another graduate of the Menilek II School, who was to have an even greater impact after 1941 than before 1935, was Mäkonnen Endalkachaw. A nephew of the noted Shāwan warrior and political figure, *Ras Bitwäddäd Täsämma Nadäw*, Mäkonnen was born in Addisgä (Shāwa) in 1890/1. Like the Zamanuél brothers, this connection seems to have benefited him. He was initiated into Menilek's court through his uncle and likewise became a natural candidate for enrolment at the Menilek II School when it was opened in 1908. The first significant post that he occupied was Ethiopian controller of the Addis Ababa–Djibouti railway. He was chosen to accompany Täfäri during his 1924 tour of Europe. He was assigned Ethiopian minister to London in 1928/9. He was recalled in 1932 after his affair with Yäshashwärq Yelma, the emperor's niece and wife to the Tegréan prince, *Ras Gugsä Araya*, which had threatened to destroy the emperor's carefully constructed Shāwan–Tegréan accord.

He was minister of the interior and subsequently governor of the western province of Illubabor, in which capacity he led his troops to the southeastern front in 1935. He accompanied the emperor into exile and returned by his side in 1941 to become a literary as well as political figure of some consequence. He was prime minister from 1943 to 1957, although actual power resided with the minister of the pen, *Tsähafē Tē'ezaz Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes*, for much of this time. His novels, which had a high dosage of the religious and the didactic and came out steadily from his haven in the southwestern outskirts of Addis Ababa (Räppi), were to have a deeper impact.¹⁸⁴

Among Mäkonnen's contemporaries at Menilek II School were Fasika Habtä-Mikaél and Zälläqä Agedäw. The former, a grandson of the venerated counsellor of Emperor Menilek, *Däjjach Gärmamé Wäldä-Hawaryat*, continued his education in the Middle East. On his return, he was made Ethiopian consul in Djibouti and subsequently member of the royal advisory council.¹⁸⁵ Zälläqä, who assumed his father's title of *näggadras* in 1918, had a highly successful career, occupying at various times the ministerial portfolios of commerce and agriculture and representing his country as minister in France. He died in June 1936.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ US 884.002/24, Southard to Sec. of St., 14.12.32, making some caustic comments, not too wide of the mark, about Mäkonnen's vanity; FO 371/10877, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25; Mäkonnen Endalkachaw, *Mäkam Bétäsaboch* (1949EC): 5, 92. The last-mentioned, which is in the nature of an autobiographical tract, while giving useful insights into social and political life in the early twentieth century, is woefully disappointing on the author's educational formation. An incorrigible addict of the pen, the author describes the notorious affair with Yäshashwärq in a thinly disguised novel, *YäFeger Chora* (1949EC); the two eventually married and lived happily together until Mäkonnen's death in 1963.

¹⁸⁵ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 101; FO 371/10877, enclosure in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25.

¹⁸⁶ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 77; Mahtämä-Selläsé, *Ché Bäläw*: 75; Zervos: 126; FO 371/10877, enclosure in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25, describing Zälläqä as a 'Great reader of European books' and 'Honest and trustworthy. Friend of Merchants'.

Four



The Second Generation

As indicated in the last chapter, the two generations of intellectuals differ in the period of their formation: the Menilek era for the first and the Täfäri–Haylä-Sellasé period for the second. Inside Ethiopia, just as Menilek II School could be regarded as the prime institution for at least one sector of the first-generation intellectuals, Täfäri Mäkonnen School – opened in 1925, nearly two decades after Menilek II School – became the *alma mater* of some members of the second generation. With regard to education abroad, one sees greater method and system in the sending of Ethiopian students abroad in the second period than in the first. The first-generation intellectuals often acquired their foreign education rather fortuitously and there was no one country that emerged as the favoured destination. In the second period, however, Täfäri and the Ethiopian state pursued the task of sending students abroad in a more systematic fashion. Moreover, although students continued to go to a number of different countries, France clearly emerged as the main destination of Ethiopian students.

Thus students began to be sent abroad in increasingly large numbers after the mid-1920s, so that their number, which was only 25 in 1924, had risen to 200 by 1934.¹ Such an increase invested the issue of sending students to foreign countries with considerable controversy. Some students had to be sent secretly for fear of antagonizing the conservative establishment. Added to this was the alarming number of students who died while pursuing their studies, mostly through exposure to the cold European winter and the penurious life that they were forced to live. Moreover, few of them came back with any worthwhile qualifications. Here, the contrast with Japanese students, who generally went to the West to acquire technical skills, was striking, since Ethiopians preferred social studies.² Finally, the Western style of life they acquired while abroad tended to alienate them from society on their return.

¹ Haile Gabriel, 'Versuch': 212.

² *Ibid.*

A particularly virulent attack on the foreign-educated appeared in a 1924 issue of *A'emero*, the oldest Amharic weekly, which did not enjoy as wide a circulation as the other weekly, *Berhanena Sālam*. After asserting that those who went abroad causing considerable expense to their parents returned merely with the qualification of interpreters, the contributor queried rather mischievously whether they would have any use for their attainments other than when Ethiopia falls under foreign rule.³ This piqued a reader of *Berhanena Sālam* into an elaborate response, arguing that parents rarely paid for their children's education in the first place, that mastery of language was the foundation of knowledge, and that the reason students could not proceed beyond acquiring a foreign language was because of lack of funds.⁴ Another contributor to *Berhanena Sālam* used the occasion of the death of an Ethiopian student in Montpellier, France, and the recall of his brother to opine that the money earmarked for educating Ethiopians abroad would have been more wisely spent if diverted into the construction of educational facilities within the country; if students had to go abroad, they should do so only for a brief capping of the educational process, rather than exposing them to the inclement European weather for a long period of time.⁵

An informant also pointed to the capricious manner in which Ethiopian students pursued their studies abroad and the speed with which they gave up traditional habits and manners. He contrasted it with the case of their Japanese counterparts, who followed courses pre-set for them by their governments and continued to adhere to their traditions. 'The Ethiopian students,' he went on, 'kept themselves aloof on their return and stayed in hotels rather than go back to live with their parents. They were naive. They did not know their way into Ethiopian society. Their European dress was the badge of their alienation.'⁶

Some of the returned students also expressed their displeasure at the situation. Mäkonnen Dästa, who himself had endured considerable financial embarrassment while a student in the United States, recommended not only the regular disbursement of student allowances but also the careful academic and medical screening of candidates for study abroad.⁷ Tedla Hailé, who had returned from Belgium with an MA degree, went even further and in a letter to Emperor Haylä-Sellasé in 1934 recommended the opening of a university in the country, making good use of the many Jews then fleeing Hitler's Germany. Students who are left to pursue their studies abroad without any guidance usually fail and come back without any qualifications, he reasoned, and will remain a permanent pain in the back of the country as their unemployment breeds communistic thinking. 'Your Majesty!' he concluded, 'The opening of a university would be the crowning achievement to what you have done so far for Ethiopia.'⁸ The minister of

³ *A'emero*, 5.11.24.

⁴ *BS*, 22.1.25; cf. *BS*, 29.1.25.

⁵ *BS*, 12.3.25.

⁶ Oral informant, Avedis Terzian.

⁷ *BS*, 15.9.32.

⁸ MPA 360/17, Tedla to Haylä-Sellasé, 10.6.26/17.2.34.

education, *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädalu, concurred with the idea of opening a university but did not relish the prospect of Jewish instructors. The minister, who was in any case lukewarm about the idea of sending students abroad, recommended a suspension of the practice for ten years.⁹

The Middle Eastern transit

When Menilek opened the school that carried his name in 1908, he did not feel comfortable until he was able to temper the influx of modern ideas that the act symbolized by hiring Coptic teachers, who, it was hoped, would strike a happy compromise between Western education and the Orthodox tradition. By accident or design, this quest for a filter or shock-absorber persisted. In the 1910s and 1920s it was to be common practice for Ethiopian students to go to either Victoria College or the French lycée at Alexandria, in Egypt, before they ventured further afield, often to France. Among such students were Aklilu Habtä-Wäld, Ethiopia's last prime minister (1961–74) under Haylä-Sellasé, who proceeded to France after his Egyptian sojourn; Ashäber Gäbrä-Heywät, son of Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ, before he continued to Switzerland; Fäqadä-Sellasé and Sirak Heruy, sons of Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, whose final destination was England; Taddäsä ZäWäldé, author of a major work on the Shāwan resistance, *Qärin Gäramäw*; and Yohannes Boru, who went to England to study engineering.¹⁰

Lebanon was another popular Middle Eastern point, although it appears to have been more of a destination in its own right than a transit stage like Alexandria. Among the students who received their education in Lebanon were: Efrém Täwäldä-Mädhen, who served as English teacher at Täfäri Mäkonnen School, then as consul-general in France and chargé d'affaires in London, and was by the emperor's side in the first critical months of his exile in 1936; Dawit Ogbazgy, press officer during the Italo-Ethiopian war; Gétahun Täsämma, future son-in-law of *Hakim* Wärqenäh and minister in Haylä-Sellasé's post-1941 government; Engeda Yohannes, Mäkonnen Haylé and Mäkonnen Dästa, who all then went on to the United States, the last-mentioned becoming minister of education in 1941; and Pawlos Badema, son of the Protestant leader *Qés* Badema, who studied music and became leader of the municipal band and was killed during the Addis Ababa riots of 2–5 May 1936.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*, Sahlé to Haylä-Sellasé, n.d.

¹⁰ From a list courteously supplied me by Christopher Clapham, who had culled it from Pankhurst, 'The Foundations of Education'; see also Täcklä-Marqos Wäldä-Gabr'el, *Asab-na Meññot Lagär Lej Bäwäkät* (1916EC): 5–6, for the names of some of the students sent abroad by Täfäri Mäkonnen; Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, *Dästa-na Keber*: 29, reporting on Ras Täfäri's visit to the Victoria College during the 1924 tour, when Fäqadä-Sellasé gave a speech on behalf of the students; *BS*, 30.12.26, printing a letter of the Proviseur of the French lycée, complaining about the old age of some of the students.

¹¹ Clapham list; oral informant, Feger Badema; Zervos: 117; FO 371/16989, Peterson to Barton, 30.3.33.

The French-educated

French undoubtedly was the language and culture of the prewar generation. It was the preferred foreign language of the two major educational institutions of the country, Menilek II and Täfäri Mäkonnen schools, although English was also taught at the latter and in fact tended to be preponderant there. A further boost to the spread of Gallic culture and civilization was provided by the Alliance Française schools in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and the French Catholic mission school in Harär. This ascendancy of the French language, although more and more challenged by English towards the end of the prewar period, came to an end only after 1941 through the predominance of first British and then American influence in Ethiopian affairs.

As indicated above, quite a few of the students who attended the French lycée in Alexandria ended up in France. The most notable example of these was Aklilu Habtä-Wäld. Others who were trained in France, either going via Alexandria or directly from Ethiopia, were his brother Akaläwärq Habtä-Wäld, who also came to occupy various ministerial portfolios until his execution along with his brother and a number of other officials of the Haylä-Sellasé regime in 1974, and Andargachäw Mäsay, future son-in-law of the emperor and his first representative in Eritrea (1952–9) after it was federated to Ethiopia. *Abba Jérôme Gäbrä-Musé* studied at the Sorbonne, and Agäñähu Engeda, Ethiopia's first modern artist, studied art at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Paris and returned married to a Swiss girl and inspired by the Impressionists.¹²

A sizeable number obtained military training at St Cyr, the elite French military academy. These included Keflé Ergätu, who served as the top security official after 1941, rising to become minister of state for public security (1961–6) and minister of interior (1966–9); Kefle Näsibu, who later joined the Holäta military school when it was opened in 1934 and was killed by the Italians in February 1937 following the attempt on the life of Graziani; and Iyyasu Mängäsha, who rose to become a general in the Ethiopian army after 1941. Asfaw Ali, Bahru Kaba and Mishka Babicheff, Ethiopia's first pilots, studied aviation.¹³

Of the French-educated, one to attain early prominence was Lorénzo Ta'ezaz. Lorénzo apparently started his education at the Swedish mission school in Asmara. Most probably on the recommendation of the Ethiopian consul, Näsibu Zamanuél, he was sent by Täfäri to Montpellier, in France, where he studied law. On his return, he served for three years as adviser to

¹² Clapham list. For Jérôme, more famous as *Abba Jérôme*, see Michel Leiris, *L'Afrique phantome* (1981): 321ff., and 'Gabra-Madhen Gabra-Muse, Souvenirs d'Erythrée recueillis par Marie-José Tubiana', in Joseph Tubiana, ed., *Guirlande pour Abba Jérôme Gabra Musé par ses élèves et ses amis* (1983): 7–41; for Agäñähu, see Ladislav Farago, *Abyssinia on the Eve* (1935): 111, 114.

¹³ Clapham list.

the special court and then served in the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission in 1934, at the time of the outbreak of the Wälwä crisis. He had in the meantime been married to Senedu Gäbru, daughter of *Käntiba* Gäbru. In 1936 he accompanied the emperor into exile and reportedly drafted the emperor's famous speech to the League. Throughout the period of exile, Lorénzo remained one of the emperor's most useful functionaries, representing him at the League of Nations, establishing links with the patriots in Gojjam and Gondär, and with the refugees, particularly the Eritrean refugees, in Kenya.¹⁴ Appropriately enough, he was made foreign minister on the emperor's restoration to his throne in 1941. However, he soon fell foul of the leading power-broker of the post-1941 order, *Tsähafē Te'ezaz* Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, and was posted as ambassador to Moscow, where he died in 1947.¹⁵

Another notable francophone intellectual who emerged as a prominent leader of the intelligentsia was Kidanä-Maryam Abärä. A native of Adwa, his education in France was sponsored by Täfäri. On his return, he joined a select circle of young Ethiopians who had won the emperor's confidence. The Hungarian journalist, Ladislav Farago, who was rather uninhibited in his choice of words, described him as a member of the emperor's 'brains trust'.¹⁶ He was equally fluent in French and Italian. He rose to become director-general in the Ministry of Education in the 1930s with the traditional rank of *blatta*. He proved an implacable opponent to Italian aggression and occupation. He also had a knack for organization, setting up what was referred to as the Young Ethiopia Society and a counterpart women's organization. Soon after liberation, he fell into disgrace because of his association with Tegréan nationalism spearheaded by *Ras* Seyum Mängäsha. But he was rehabilitated to become controller of the railway and vice-minister in the Ministry of Health.¹⁷

Death appeared to have been the plague of Ethiopian students in France. Quite a few of them surrendered to the cold weather. The students were not financially well-provided enough to afford warm clothes, sometimes being forced to wear a communal coat in shifts when they wanted to venture outside. Government allowances either did not come on time or were squandered away in riotous living by profligate ministers like Getachaw Abata in Paris and Mäkonnen Endalkachaw in London. *Berhanena Sälam* is full of notices of students' deaths or recalls for fear of their lives.¹⁸ The death in 1931 of Mänker Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, brother of the famous landscape gardener, Sebbatu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, provoked the following moving dirge by his sister:

¹⁴ BS, 16.2.33; G.L. Steer, *Caesar in Abyssinia* (1936): 75; Haylä-Selläsé, *Heywäté-na*, II: 103–5, 178; IES Ms. No. 1984, report of Lorénzo to Haylä-Selläsé on his visit to the refugee camps in Kenya, 3.12.40.

¹⁵ Christopher Clapham, *Haile-Selassie's Government* (1969): 195.

¹⁶ *Abyssinia on the Eve*: 162.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 63–4; Steer, *Caesar in Abyssinia*: 34–5; oral informant Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya.

¹⁸ BS, 28.6.34, 5.10.31; Heruy, *YäHeywätTarik*: 86; oral informants Dr Ammanuél Gäbrä-Selläsé and Sebbatu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus.

The Second Generation

በፓሪስ ከተማ ሠራህ አሉኝ ቤት

ዘመድ አይገባበት ለት አይከራበት

አገር ምረጭ ቤሉኝ ፖረብን አልወድም

ያይን አዋጅ አለበት ያየውን አይለድም

ፓሪስ ከተማ ላይ ወድቀህ አንዳገዳ

ከእቶችህ በቀር ሌላ ግን ተጉዳ

I hear you have made your abode in Paris,
where your kins can not enter nor your sister be proud of.
Of all places, Paris would be my last choice,
for all that go there never return.
There, you lie prostrate like a cane,
woe to us your sisters, for we are the ones who suffer.¹⁹

Two other centres of francophone education were Switzerland and Belgium. To the former went Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädāñ's son, Ashäber, who studied law at Lausanne. In 1931, while still a student there, he wrote a book entitled *La Vérité sur l'Éthiopie révélée après le couronnement du Roi des Rois*, showing the precarious nature of Ethiopia's independence and arguing forcefully the need for a seaport. It is not exactly clear whether it was Ashäber or another graduate of Lausanne by the name of Gäbrä-Heywät who, after fighting in the Italo-Ethiopian war under *Ras* Emeru, established for himself the reputation of transposing his struggle against Fascism on to the international stage by joining the loyalist forces in the Spanish civil war.²⁰ Germachaw Täklä-Hawaryat, another son of an earlier intellectual, also studied in Switzerland. After 1941 he combined ministerial service in Haylä-Sellase's government with literary pursuits, writing a famous novel (*Araṗa*) and a play on the nineteenth-century visionary emperor, Tēwodros.

Tedla Hailé, or Tedla Haile Modja Guermame, as he elaborately styles himself on the title page of his thesis, graduated in 1930 from the Colonial University of Antwerp in Belgium with an MA degree. He had gone there in 1923 and his education was sponsored by a Belgian board member of the government-sponsored alcohol monopoly. His thesis, entitled 'Pourquoi et comment pratiquer une politique d'assimilation en Éthiopie', can be described as the first serious attempt to address the issue of national integration in Ethiopia, albeit from an unabashedly chauvinistic standpoint. The central theme of the thesis is the need for the assimilation of the Oromo. On his return, he was first assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then made Ethiopian consul at Asmara. In the latter capacity he began to send despatches to the emperor and his foreign minister, Heruy, urging the incitement of the Eritrean population against the Italians to preempt the imminent Italian invasion. With the outbreak of the war, he crossed the Märäb and fought under *Ras* Seyum Mängäsha, the Tegréan

¹⁹ BS, 10.9.31.

²⁰ NTEN, 6.2.37.

prince; he died during the war. He was married to one of the daughters of *Hakim Wärqenäh*, Elizabeth.²¹

The Italian-educated

Italy was not a popular destination for Ethiopian students. This may have been due partly to the strains that marked the relations between the two countries. The most prominent product of Italian education, Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, was sent to Italy in the heyday of the friendship between Menilek and Italy. But Afäwärq's dubious record during the campaign of Adwa could hardly have helped to induce either Menilek or his successors to send any more students to Italy. From Eritrea, however, which had become an Italian colony in 1890, a number of students, mostly Catholic, found their way to the Vatican, mostly in the 1920s and 1930s. One of these, Gäbrä-Iyyäsus Haylu, subsequently became a prominent historian and essayist. On the secular plane, Tädlä Bayru, who after 1941 emerged as one of the leaders of the unionist movement in Eritrea and became the first chief executive of federated Eritrea, studied pedagogy in Florence.²²

In the early 1920s Täfäri, at the instigation of *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Selläsé Barya-Gabr, the Italophile governor of Adwa, sent a group of four students to Italy. Three of them, Fälläqä Wäldä-Hanna, Haylä-Maryam Täklé and Mäkurya Wäldä-Selläsé, were outstanding graduates of Menilek II School and had been earmarked for scholarship in France. It was decided to send them to Italy instead when the much-coveted French scholarships were given to others with better connections. Haylä-Maryam died suddenly before the departure date. Fälläqä died of the cold in Turin. Mäkurya studied geometry and agronomy in Rome and Florence, respectively.²³

The fourth student, Mikaél Täsämma, probably had the most distinguished career of the lot. A native of Adwa and a protégé of *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Selläsé, he capped his education with a doctoral thesis in political science at the University of Rome. But the thesis was deemed so anti-Italian that he was not allowed to defend it. While in Italy, he contributed a series of articles on classical political economy to *Berhanena Sälam*. He returned to Ethiopia on the eve of the war and was put in charge of Italian affairs at the Foreign Ministry. During the Graziani massacre of February 1937, he

²¹ MPA 335, Tedla to Haylä-Selläsé, 6.11.24/13.7.32; MAE Afrique K/60, encl. in Baelen to MAE, 20.7.35; del Boca: 232; Arnaldo Cipolla, *L'Abissinia in armi* (1935): 238–9; oral informant, Elizabeth Wärqenäh; BS, 23.11.33, on the double wedding ceremony of the daughters of *Hakim Wärqenäh*, when the enlightened father gave a discourse on the merits of marriage by mutual consent. Elizabeth later married Yelma Déréssa, Haylä-Selläsé's celebrated minister of finance in the post-1941 period.

²² Clapham list.

²³ Oral informant Mäkurya Wäldä-Selläsé; see BS, 10.3.32, for an article by same relating the Italian experience. There are, however, some discrepancies between the written version and the oral testimony.

was a natural candidate for liquidation but was lucky enough to escape with internment at Dānané, the Italian concentration camp in their Somali colony. After liberation, he occupied the posts of director-general and inspector-general in the Ministry of Justice. He retired from government service in 1947/8 and engaged in private legal practice until his death in 1963.²⁴

The British-educated

It should come as a matter of no surprise that *Hakim* Wārḡenāh's sons were among the first to be sent to England for their education. Of these, the two who attained particular prominence were Yoséf and Benyam. Their educational expenses were apparently borne by Tāfāri, who, as is evident from a letter he wrote to their father in 1923, would have preferred them to be sent to the United States or Belgium.²⁵ They appear to have started their education in England in 1924, in the wake of *Ras* Tāfāri's tour, after they had gone with their father, who was a member of the royal entourage.²⁶

After five years at Trent College, they went to Loughborough College in Leicestershire, England, where they both studied engineering. Their college records show an uncommon appetite for sports. They featured in cricket, hockey and rugby teams and also took part in boxing matches; Yoséf even managed to become captain of the college cricket club in 1935.²⁷ They were back in Ethiopia at the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war, Benyam after securing his diploma but Yoséf with still one more year to go. They are said to have fought at the Battle of Maychāw and appear to have gone briefly into exile after the collapse of the Ethiopian army. In the summer of 1936, the emperor sent the two brothers, along with Fāqadā-Sellasé Heruy and *Qāññāz-mach* Bālehu, to join up with *Ras* Emeru in western Ethiopia. They joined the Black Lion organization and fought under Emeru's command until he surrendered in December 1936. Like other members of the Black Lion, they were left in peace, working at the big Italian service shop known as ORMA Garage, until the Graziani incident took place. They were then hounded and summarily executed.²⁸

²⁴ Oral information from Mākurya Wāldā-Sellasé and Sehul Mikaél, son of Mikaél Tāsāmma.

²⁵ MPA 335, Tāfāri to Wārḡenāh (copy), 23.1.16/4.10.23. See also *ibid.*, Qātsālāwārḡ (their mother) to Haylā-Sellasé, 10.11.24/17.7.32, pleading for the continuation of the financial assistance for the short period of time that remained.

²⁶ FO 371/10875, Rey to Jones, 19.4.25.

²⁷ Archives of the Loughborough University of Technology (as the college is now known), LC/AD3 and AD6, LC/Pm1, the latter containing various issues of the college journal, *The Limit*. Xerox copies of these papers were kindly supplied to me by Mrs J.G. Clark, the university archivist.

²⁸ FO 371/23374, Martin (Wārḡenāh) to FO, 20.1.39; oral informants Sosena Wārḡenāh and Elizabeth Wārḡenāh; Haylā-Sellasé, *Heywāṭē-na*, II: 26. Their death was lamented by *The Limit*, XIX, 3 (Summer 1937) (see note 27), which paid tribute to the brothers' 'keen and versatile' sportsmanship and regretted the talents denied their country by their untimely death.

The two sons of Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, Fäqadä-Sellasé and Sirak, were likewise educated in England. Fäqadä-Sellasé, the elder brother, who was born around 1908, was also sometimes referred to as George, a name probably coined by his foreign classmates to circumvent his tortuous Ethiopian name, a common enough occurrence; Sirak's earlier name was Wäldä-Sellasé. Both were first sent to Victoria College in Alexandria, Fäqadä-Sellasé at the age of nine and Sirak after he had demonstrated a precocious mastery of traditional church education at the age of 11, by which time, according to his father, he had completed *qené* and was beginning the interpretation of the Scriptures.²⁹

The brothers had an outstanding record at Victoria College; Fäqadä-Sellasé was awarded a gold medal by Täfäri for his scholastic achievements in 1919 and Sirak's brilliant performance gained him a citation in the Egyptian newspaper *Al Mukattam*.³⁰ They then proceeded to England to pursue higher studies, Fäqadä-Sellasé going to Cambridge and Sirak to Oxford. But Sirak's three-year residence at Brasenose College seems to have been memorable more for wrangling about arrears in the payment of his fees than academic application.³¹ On his return, Sirak served as secretary-general in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where his father was the minister, and secretary of the Senate.³² Fäqadä-Sellasé attained prominence in 1936, becoming the chief moving spirit in western Ethiopia for continued resistance to the Fascist invaders. He was a member of the Black Lion organization and was liquidated in February 1937 after being subjected to a long discourse by his persecutors for his incitement to rebellion and his father's continuation of the diplomatic struggle in exile.³³ Sirak survived the Fascist occupation to write the classic Amharic translation of Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*.³⁴

Sirak, as well as other Ethiopian students in the United Kingdom, faced, like their colleagues in France and the United States, serious financial embarrassments in the course of their studies. Sirak, according to a British official report, was forced to abandon 'his promising career at Oxford' and leave for Ethiopia 'under a cloud about August 12th 1932'.³⁵ A letter in January 1933 to the British Foreign Office by Yohannes Boru, who was studying engineering and was writing on behalf of all the students in the

²⁹ See the rather intimate biographical entries on both in Heruy (their father), *YäHewwät Tarik*: 68, 101. See also National Library, Täfäri Letterbook: 843.

³⁰ Täfäri Letterbook: 843; *BS*, 25.4.29.

³¹ Brasenose College Files, College to Emperor Haylä-Sellasé I, 17.2.32; Sirak to College, 24.2.30, 19.7.39, enclosing in the latter a cheque 'in settlement of my account which I respectfully acknowledge is extremely overdue' and thanking the college for its 'unique' generosity.

³² US 884.01A/22, Southard to Sec. of St., 23.1.32.

³³ Haylä-Sellasé, *Hewwäté-na*, II: 155–6.

³⁴ Sirak Wäldä-Sellasé Heruy, *YäRassēlas Mäsfenä Ityopya Tarik* (1939/1957EC). He sent a complimentary copy to his *alma mater*, asking jocularly whether a translation would entitle him to join the ranks of 'the olympians of BNC authors': Brasenose College Files, Sirak to College Librarian, 14.5.47.

³⁵ FO 371/16989, Taylor-Jones to FO, 20.11.33.

United Kingdom on a letterhead entitled 'The Student Movement House', puts across the case in unequivocal fashion:

We the senders of this letter are students sent by the Ethiopian Government to England. We have not been able to get our proper allowance for the last four months in spite of our efforts in informing the Ministry of Education by means of letters and telegrams.

The Ethiopian Legation here could give us no help and as our debts are very high we are in a very grave position.

Sir, seeing, therefore, that we have no other alternative, we are writing this to ask you to get in touch with the Ethiopian Foreign Office on our behalf so that they may either send us the money without delay or call us back.³⁶

Of the Ethiopian students in the United Kingdom at this time, four more are worth mentioning. Alāmāwārq Bäyyānā studied veterinary medicine and later made history as president of the Black Lion organization. He miraculously survived the Graziani massacre to become, after liberation, liaison officer between the Ethiopian government and the British administration. His sense of probity brought him into conflict with the get-rich-quick Custodian of Enemy Property, Mäkonnen Wäldä-Yohannes, and his powerful brother, *Tsähafe Te'ezaz* Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes; the brothers were blamed by some for his violent death.³⁷ Yelma Déréssa, son of *Blatta* Déréssa, studied at the London School of Economics. Although a member of the Black Lion, he survived the Graziani massacre thanks to his internment in Italy with *Ras* Emeru. After liberation, he held various ministerial portfolios, the most notable of which was that of finance, with which he came to be so closely identified.

Two students went to the Bible College in Scotland: Abbäbä Rätta and Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé. The former, who spent the period of Italian rule in exile, occupied various ministerial posts after 1941, notably that of health. Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé had attended the Swedish mission school in Asmara from 1920 to 1925 and was among the first batch of students at Täfäri Mäkonnen School. He was teaching at the Swedish mission school in Addis Ababa after his return from Scotland when the Italo-Ethiopian war broke out. He was picked up during the Graziani massacre and interned at Dänané until 1940. After liberation, he liaised between the British and Ethiopian authorities.³⁸

³⁶ FO 371/16989, Yohannes to FO, 4.1.33. The matter was conveyed by the British minister, Sir Sidney Barton, to the minister of education, *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädalü, who blamed his predecessor for the arrears and spoke of fresh remittances made to the students: FO 371/16989, Barton to Peterson, 20.2.33. See *ibid.*, Peterson to Barton, 30.3.33, for a report on the status of the Ethiopian students in Britain by the Ethiopian chargé d'affaires in London, Haylé Täwäldä-Mädhen. Peterson credits Barton's intervention for Sahlé Tsädalü's demonstration of 'a direct interest in these unfortunate young men'.

³⁷ Clapham list; oral informant Sebhatu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus.

³⁸ He is one of the few survivors of the prewar generation of students and was heading the Mäkanä-Iyyäsus Lutheran church in Addis Ababa when I interviewed him. He is a reliable informant, too, not only about his own life but also about his contemporaries.

The American-educated

The United States did not emerge as the main destination for Ethiopian students until the 1950s and 1960s. But already before 1935 it had attracted some students, who subsequently attained national prominence out of proportion with their number. They can be divided into two groups. The first was what we may call the Muskingum group, after the Presbyterian college in central Ohio where the students went in the 1920s. The second group, in the 1930s, went to various colleges on the east coast.

The Muskingum boys, or 'princes' as the local people preferred to regard them, were Bāshahwerād Habtä-Wäld, Mälaku Bäyyan and Wärfu Gobāna. Apparently intimidated by their curious Ethiopian names, the Muskingum community baptized them as Matthew, Mark and Luke.³⁹ All were protégés of Täfäri; two of them, Mälaku and Wärfu, are in fact said to have been related to him; Mälaku's mother, Dästa, was the emperor's cousin.⁴⁰ Bāshahwerād, a native of Märhabété in northern Shāwa, was introduced to Täfäri through his elder brother, who was a retainer of Ras Mäkonnen. Bāshahwerād and Täfäri, who were about the same age, reportedly grew up together in Harär and went to the same school. Bāshahwerād later served under Täfäri in his maiden post as governor of Sälalé.⁴¹ Mälaku was ten years younger than Bāshahwerād and was born in Wällo in 1900.⁴² Wärfu's relationship to Täfäri is not clearly established, except that, like the two others, he grew up in Täfäri's court.

Their chance for education abroad came with the arrival from the Sudan in 1918 of the Presbyterian missionary, Dr Charles Lambie, at the invitation of the Ethiopian authorities, to help check the influenza epidemic that was raging at the time. Lambie agreed to sponsor their education in the United States. Initially, however, they were sent to India, which they found oppressive, both politically and in terms of climate.⁴³ It was then that they proceeded to Muskingum College in Ohio, where they stayed from 1922 to 1929. Regarded as African princes, they made an exotic addition to the student population. Nor was interest in this exotic addition confined to the college community. The three boys were introduced to President Harding

³⁹ *The Black and Magenta* (Muskingum College paper), 1.10.35.

⁴⁰ Täfäri's and Dästa's mothers were sisters: 'An Ethiopian Emissary to the American Public: Biographical Sketch – Mälaku E. Bayen M.D.', n.d., Schomburg Center.

⁴¹ Oral informants Sebhatu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus and Sara Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, brother-in-law and wife, respectively, of Bāshahwerād; US 884.00/273, Southard to Sec. of St., 2.7.34.

⁴² BS, 5.6.30, 'An Ethiopian Emissary', Schomburg Center, New York. Haylä-Selläsé, in his autobiography, does not allude to any kinship, however, merely referring to Mälaku as 'Our *elṣen ashkar* [i.e. chamberlain] whom We had raised from his childhood': *Heywäṭe-na*, II: 176.

⁴³ Mälaku E. Bayen, ed., *The March of Black Men – Ethiopia Leads. Official Report of the Present State of Affairs and Prospectus* (1939): 3–4. Mälaku recounts that he and his colleagues were nauseated by their English teachers' constant glorification of the British empire. They decided to quit and proceed to the United States when one of those teachers told them that their country was bound to come under British rule.

on their arrival in 1922.⁴⁴ A letter from Täfäri to Harding's successor, Calvin Coolidge, reveals that he too showed an interest in the young Ethiopians.⁴⁵ Täfäri also demonstrated his special interest in the Presbyterian college by donating Amharic books to the library and gold, silver and bronze medals to be awarded to outstanding students.⁴⁶ Their education included preparatory instruction at what was known as the Academy and the regular undergraduate courses at the college. Mälaku graduated in 1928, majoring in chemistry, and Bāshahweräd in 1929, specializing in economics.⁴⁷

Both Bāshahweräd and Mälaku then did graduate studies at Ohio State University, the former registering for commerce and journalism, the latter apparently continuing with his chemistry.⁴⁸ Bāshahweräd then returned to Ethiopia and Mälaku went to study medicine at Howard University. No sooner had he started his medical studies than news of the confrontation in March 1930 between his patron, *Negus* Täfäri, and *Ras* Gugsa Wälé, husband of Empress Zāwditu and governor of Bägémder reached him, embellished with rumours of the assassination of Täfäri. He hastily returned to Ethiopia and used the occasion of his return to lobby successfully together with Bāshahweräd for the appointment of their Muskingum mentor, Professor Ernest Work, as educational adviser to the Ethiopian government.⁴⁹

Boundless energy and perseverance were the distinctive marks of Mälaku. Towards the end of 1930, he returned to the United States in the company of *Käntiba* Gäbru. They were officially entrusted with the task of securing an American financial adviser and a loan to offset the dire consequences attending the depreciation of silver on the world market. 'Without American help,' Mälaku entreated, 'Ethiopia is lost.'⁵⁰ There is no record of the mission's success on the issue of the loan. But they were able to secure the services of E.A. Colson who as financial adviser, was to become perhaps the most important of the foreign advisers who served

⁴⁴ 'An Ethiopian Emissary'.

⁴⁵ US 711.84/2, Täfäri to Coolidge, 18.11.23.

⁴⁶ 'Report of the President of Muskingum College to the Board of Trustees for the Year 1924-25'.

⁴⁷ Oral informants Sebhātu and Sara Gäbrä-Iyyäsus; William L. Fisk, *A History of Muskingum College* (1978): 174, which also records Täfäri's donation to the college in 1925 of sixteen Amharic volumes and medals bearing the imperial insignia; 'Muskingum and Ethiopia', *Muskingum College Bulletin* (1973): 3; *The Black and Magenta*, 1.10.35, 7.3.44; records supplied by the Muskingum Alumni Office; Muskingum College Archives, Reports of the President to the Board of Trustees, 1924-5, 1927-8, and 1928-9; *ibid.*, J. Knox Montgomery (Sr.) Papers, Montgomery to Coonradt, 24.5.23, reporting on his meeting with Princess Mānān during his visit to Jerusalem and regretting that he had no time to visit Addis Ababa.

⁴⁸ I had access to a copy of Bāshahweräd's admission card, courtesy of his daughter, *Wäyžāro* Wäyñeshät Bāshahweräd. See also Report of President [of Muskingum College] to the Board of Trustees, 1928, 1929.

⁴⁹ *BS*, 5.6.30; US 884.001/24 1/2, Mälaku to Mānān, draft tel., n.d. but filed 22.5.30; US 884.001/25, American legation to Sec. of St., 30.12.29; US 884.01A/4, Park to Sec. of St., 11.6.30; Castle to Southard, 28.7.30.

⁵⁰ US 884.51A/1, Park to sec. of St., 1.7.30; FO 371/14598, Lindsay to Henderson, 7.8.30. See also US 884.51A/3, Park to Sec. of St., 4.7.30; files 6, 8, 9, and 17 in the same volume. Interestingly, Mälaku and Gäbru were accompanied by the president of Muskingum College, Dr Montgomery, when they called at the State Department on 1 August 1930.

Haylä-Sellasé in the brief but crucial period before the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war. In 1932, Mälaku floated the idea of his serving as an Ethiopian passport agent to process the visa applications of the growing number of African-Americans wishing to immigrate to Ethiopia.⁵¹ In 1933 he was attached to the special mission to the United States led by the emperor's son-in-law, *Ras Dästa Damtāw*.⁵² At the same time he expressed his displeasure with the projected anthropological mission to Ethiopia led by Carleton S. Coon, arguing that subjecting Ethiopians to anthropological investigation was an insult to their dignity.⁵³ He even succeeded in early 1934 in getting the Ethiopian government's authorization to purchase arms on its behalf.⁵⁴

Above all, Mälaku's life was marked by close identification with the African-American community in the United States. One dramatic result of this was his abandonment of his Ethiopian fiancée, the daughter of Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, to marry an African-American girl who was presumably working at the registrar's office of Howard University.⁵⁵ Mälaku later explained this decision as a demonstration of his belief in race solidarity.⁵⁶ When he returned to Ethiopia rather precipitately in 1930 in the wake of the widespread rumours of Tāfāri's assassination, he brought along an African-American pilot by the name of Hubert Julian, who had earlier tried to fly across the Atlantic with an aircraft which he had christened *Qādamawi Ityopya* (Ethiopia I); the machine broke down after five hours, but the intrepid aviator survived. For his Ethiopian audience, he performed some parachuting stunts, which earned him decoration and a donation of 1,000 berr by the emperor.⁵⁷

Julian was only one of a number of African-Americans who were attracted to Ethiopia in the early 1930s. Nor was Mälaku their only sponsor. His enthusiasm for and solidarity with African-Americans was shared by Bāshahwerād and *Kāntiba* Gäbru. The latter had apparently developed an interest in the African-American community during his many trips to the United States. A letter that he wrote in 1933 to Edna Jackson of Buffalo, New York, who had expressed her wish to emigrate to Ethiopia, expressed an almost total identification with that community. After encouraging her to come with all possible speed, Gäbru concludes his letter by saying:⁵⁸

⁵¹ US 701.8411, Southard to Sec. of St., 17.2.32; Colonel H. Murray Jacoby Papers (Schomburg), Mälaku to Jacoby, 28.12.31. Colonel Jacoby was special envoy to Ethiopia at the time of Emperor Haylä-Sellasé's coronation in November 1930.

⁵² US 033.8411 Special Mission/49, Murray to Lardner, 20.7.33.

⁵³ US 811.42784/61, Southard to Sec. of St., 9.10.33.

⁵⁴ Jacoby Papers, Heruy to Jacoby, 9.3.34, encl. in Mälaku to Jacoby, 28.6.34; Mälaku to Jacoby, 1.7.34.

⁵⁵ US 811.42784/27, Lardner to Murray, 14.10.31; *The Black and Magenta*, 1.10.35.

⁵⁶ Mälaku, *The March of Black Men*: 6.

⁵⁷ *BS*, 5.6.30.

⁵⁸ US 884.55/17, Gäbru to Jackson, 2.6.33. See also US 884.01A/8, Southard to Sec. of St., 30.7.30. For a lease on his land at Furi, in the southwestern outskirts of Addis Ababa, that Gäbru gave to R.W. Platt, 'my Afro-American friend', see US 884.55/16, encl. in Southard to Sec. of St., 27.6.33.

The Second Generation

I hope God will protect all my brethren over there, until deliverance comes. I wish all who can come would come 'ere it be too late.

Yours for the Race
Kantiba Gabrou

The outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935 and the Fascist occupation that followed provoked Mälaku into an even more ardent sense of patriotism and an even greater sense of identification with the African-American community. He rushed to Ethiopia when war became imminent and accompanied the emperor to the Maychäw front in his professional capacity. After Ethiopia's defeat he went with the emperor into exile in England. He was soon despatched to New York, where, in Harlem, he found his natural political ambience. Merging Ethiopian patriotism and black identity, he was able to galvanize considerable support for the Ethiopian cause through his organization, the Ethiopian World Federation, and his paper, *Voice of Ethiopia*. He died in 1940, of lobar pneumonia.⁵⁹

Bäshahweräd's first appointment was as director of the municipality of Dire Dawa. The most important station on the railway line between the French colony and Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa served as a sanatorium for the French residents of Djibouti during the hot summer months. It had become a veritable French enclave inside Ethiopian territory. This was unpalatable to the strongly nationalistic Bäshahweräd, and he set himself on the mission of dismantling the long-standing privileges that the French had enjoyed in the town. He started levying a property tax on expatriate residents of the town and refused to pay the high electricity tariff that the French supplier, De Monfred, was charging.⁶⁰ The French retaliated by wielding their deadly weapon, the railway. An 'assault' on a French family triggered a strike by the foreign employees of the railway, thus paralysing the country's major lifeline. Bäshahweräd got little support from his superiors, either the emperor's representative in Harär province, *Däjjach Gäbrä-Maryam Gari*, or the authorities in Addis Ababa. If anything, they were alarmed by Bäshahweräd upsetting what they had hitherto considered an amicable relationship. The resultant isolation of Bäshahweräd and the feeling of ambivalence that this engendered is revealed in a letter that he wrote to the emperor in early April 1932:

... እኔ መቸም አገሪን ለግጦትምና ለግረዳ ነገር ጃንሆይን ደስ ለግረዳሽ መልካም
ነገር ሁሉ እንኳንስ አንድ ጊዜና መቸም ጊዜ ብምት ደስታዬ እንደሆነ አይጠረጠርም።

⁵⁹ Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 291–2; Haylä-Sellásé, *Heywäté-na*, II: 176; US 033.8411/88, State Dept memo, 5.10.36; Walter C. Daniel, *Black Journals of the United States* (1982): 12. Nor did Mälaku forget his *alma mater*, Muskingum, where he gave two addresses, in 1937 and 1938: *The Black and Magenta*, 8.3.38.

⁶⁰ IES Ms. no. 1210, Wäldä-Giyorgis to Bäshahweräd, 21.8.22/30.5.30; *ibid.*, Heruy to Bäshahweräd, 1.9.23/9.5.31. Both letters suggest that the authorities in Addis Ababa were rather alarmed at Bäshahweräd's confrontation with the French.

ነገር ግን ከዚህ ቀደም ብዎት ሥሜን የሚከሰጠው ሥራ አልሰራሁም በማለት ይህ መልካም ምኞቱ እስኪፈጸም ድረስ በሥጋ ሕይወት ከመኖር ወደ አስመኖር አንዳላልፍ ብዙህ አድርጌ አፈራለሁ። በዚህ ወረቀት የሰግሁትን ነገር ብዙህ ጊዜ በቃልም ሰምቼዋለሁና ኋላ አንድ ነገር ብሆን ለጊዜው አየተድ ተብሎ ከማዘን በተቀረ ለኔም ለሃገሬም ምንም ጥቅም ነገር ሊደረግ አይቻልምና ቦታ በለወጥልኝ በጣም ፈቃዴ ነው። ነገር ግን ገርማዊነትዎን አስጠነቅቅታለሁ ድሬዳዋ ልልና ላገሩ ጥቅም የማያሰብ ሰው የተማረና ላገሩ ቅናት የሌለው ሰው የተሾመ እንደሆነ በጥቂት አመታት ውስጥ በውጭ አገር ሰዎች ፈቃድ አዳሬ መሆኗ አይጠረጠርም። ደግሞም ከዚህ አነሰ ሥራ ከምገዣና ጠላቶቻችን ደስ ከማሰኘት ያነሰም ማዕረግና ማደረግ ከመቀበል እዚሁ አሁን አስሁበት ቦታ መሞቱ ብዙህ ደስ ያሰኛል።

There should be no doubt that I am prepared to die a hundred times for the good of my country and the happiness of Your Majesty. But, I do not want to die before I have achieved something that will immortalize my name. If anything happens to me, it will all be forgotten after the initial expression of shock; hence, I wish to be transferred to another place. But I warn Your Majesty, if you appoint over Dire Dawa someone who is lax and is not deeply concerned for his country, Dire Dawa will undoubtedly fall under foreign rule in a matter of a few years. Rather than be transferred to a lower post and please our enemies, I would rather gladly die here.⁶¹

Bāshahwerād was finally recalled towards the end of the year, being replaced by *Lej* Tāfārā Gābrä-Maryam, who had been Ethiopian consul in Djibouti.⁶²

One of those who was extremely gratified at Bāshahwerād's removal was the French archbishop, André Jarousseau. Dubbing him 'a serpent' and 'Tsärrä-Maryam' (Anti-Mary), he attributed Bāshahwerād's activities, which he deemed so injurious to Franco-Ethiopian amity, to his American, i.e. Presbyterian, training. The Catholic prelate was apparently oblivious of his own role as the defender of French interests. As he wrote jubilantly to Emperor Haylä-Sellāsé following Bāshahwerād's dismissal:

እድሬዳዋ የነበረ አንድ እዋብ የልዑል ራስ መኩንንን ሥራ ሲያጠፋ ይፈልግ ነበር የጅቡቲ በርም ሊዘጋ ይጣጣር ነበር። በዚህች በር ኢትዮጵያ ደገነነትዋንና ልማትዋን አገኝታለች። እዋቡን ስለሻሩት በጣም ገርማዎን አመሰግናለሁ። ሥፍራውን ሌላ ጊዜ ከነበሩ መልካሞች ኢትዮጵያውያን የልዑል ራስ መኩንንና የግርማዊ ልጃቸውን ሥራና ወዳጅነት ከፈረንሳይ ጋራ መጠበቅ ለሚችል ይሰጡት። አንዱ ፈረንሳዊ ብቻ ነው ኢትዮጵያ በተቸገረች ጊዜ የሚረዳ። ፈረንሳዊ አንድ ጊዜ ሰንኳ በእጁ ላይ የኢትዮጵያዊ ደም አይገኝበትም።

⁶¹ MPA 514, Bāshahwerād to Haylä-Sellāsé, 5.8.24/13.4.32. See also US 884.00/273, Southard to Sec. of St., 2.7.34, for the American minister's observation that Bāshahwerād 'would give his life for Emperor if asked, and Emperor knows it'.

⁶² Oral informant Sebhātu Gābrä-Iyyāsūs; FO 371/16102, Broadmead to Simon, 4.6.32; US 884.00/273, Southard to Sec. of St., 26.12.32.

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A serpent who was in Dire Dawa was going to destroy the work of *Ras* Mäkonnen. He was striving to close the Djibouti gate, which has brought only prosperity and security to Ethiopia. I thank Your Majesty deeply for having removed this serpent. Give the post to someone who can continue the work and friendship with France of *Ras* Mäkonnen and his son, His Majesty. Only France has been ready to help Ethiopia in her hour of need. France has never had Ethiopian blood on her hands.⁶³

The archbishop continued in the same vein in a letter to one of his followers, Asfaw Andargé, who had apparently made a farewell speech in praise of Bāshahwerād when the latter left Dire Dawa after the incident. Arguing that Ethiopia had to be grateful to France for her independence and her admission into the League of Nations, he went on to warn that Bāshahwerād's Protestant machinations could only be injurious to his country and his sovereign.⁶⁴

It was not only with French jurisdiction that Bāshahwerād was concerned. During his brief tenure of office, he initiated a number of measures to modernize the administration of the town. These included: easing of the burden of taxes borne by the poorer sectors of society; the sale of unutilized land; the construction of a road linking Dire Dawa with the regional capital, Harär; and opening a school and a municipal health centre, using the services of two African-Americans, Cyril Price and Reuben S. Young, respectively.⁶⁵

Bāshahwerād's fears of demotion were unwarranted. Or perhaps his passionate pleas to the emperor were heeded. His next post was the director-generalship of the Ministry of Finance. As the ministerial incumbent, *Bäjerond* Feqrä-Sellasé, was scarcely conversant with the affairs of the ministry, Bāshahwerād was the *de facto* minister. Simultaneously, his location in the capital enabled him to emerge as one of the visible leaders of the group of educated Ethiopians whom foreigners styled the Young Ethiopians.⁶⁶ In 1936 he accompanied the emperor into exile. He later changed his mind and returned to Fascist-occupied Ethiopia. He was living in peace when the Graziani incident took place. Bāshahwerād was picked as one of the prime suspects, his return from the safety of exile being invested with special significance as evidence of a special mission that he

⁶³ Capuchin Archives, 2R 200, Jarosseau to Haylä-Sellasé, 19.10.24/26.6.32. See also *ibid.*, 30.9.24/6.6.32; 2R 201, French Legation to Jarosseau, 11.6.32.

⁶⁴ Capuchin Archives 2R 201, Jarosseau to Asfaw Andargé, n.d.

⁶⁵ IES Ms. 1207, MPA to Bāshahwerād, 13.11.22/20.7.30; MPA to Gäbrä-Maryam, 5.9.22/13.5.30; Ms. 1201, Haylä-Sellasé to Bāshahwerād, 6.4.24/16.12.31, 14.3.25/23.11.32, 13.11.22/20.7.30, 10.12.23/16.8.31; Ms. 1198, Sahlé Tsädalu to Bāshahwerād, 23.2.24/4.11.31; Price to Bāshahwerād, 6.2.31, 9.4.31, 10.2.32, 12.4.32, 15.9.32; Ms. 1210, Heruy to Bāshahwerād, 2.1.25/12.9.32; FO 371/16103, encl. in Barton to Peterson, 22.10.32, which preferred to regard Price as a Bolshevik agent. Bāshahwerād eventually fell out with both of his African-American aides. But, like Mälaku, his relationship with the African-American community was generally very cordial, and he is even reported to have sent his 14-year-old son for education to Cuba with an African-American veterinarian in 1934: US 884.00/273, Southard to Sec. of St., 2.7.34.

⁶⁶ Informant Sebhātu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus; US 884.00/273, Southard to Sec. of St., 2.7.34.

must have been entrusted with by the emperor. Coupled with other grievances that the Italians had against him,⁶⁷ he became a natural candidate for liquidation. He was subjected to a particularly harsh process of interrogation and appears to have died under torture.⁶⁸

In late 1930, three other Ethiopians were sent to the United States for higher studies. They were Engeda Yohannes, Mäkonnen Dästa and Mäkonnen Haylē. They joined Mälaku at Howard University but were dispersed a year later: Mäkonnen Dästa joined the prestigious medical school at Harvard, his namesake went to New York and Engeda to Cornell. Remittances were a perennial problem and the three young men sometimes had to resort to sending strongly worded telegrams threatening to return home forthwith unless they were promptly supplied with funds. Conversely, the sending of money was occasion for exuberant expressions of joy.⁶⁹ Of the three, Mäkonnen Dästa attained the highest position on his return, becoming minister of education in 1941.

The Catholic group

Catholicism represented the first organized challenge to the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits, through Emperor Susneyos (ruled 1607–32), nearly succeeded in disestablishing it as the national religion. Their failure not only led to the severance of links with Europe for the following two centuries, but also stigmatized Catholicism both in its own right and as a manifestation of any deviation, perceived or real, from orthodoxy. In the period under investigation, Tāfāri's political opponents frequently resorted to the Catholic stigma to check his almost inexorable rise to power. Two factors were adduced to lend credibility to the charge: his early educational formation under Catholic prelates and his close association with a small but powerful group of Catholic intellectuals.⁷⁰

After the major setback that it suffered in the seventeenth century, Catholicism re-emerged with renewed energy in the nineteenth century.

⁶⁷ They had neither forgotten nor forgiven his siphoning of intelligence on their war preparations and his secret instigation of the people of Mārhabētē, his native province, not to submit to the Italians. See Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 282–3, for details.

⁶⁸ Informants Sebhātu and Sara Gäbrä-Iyyäsus; Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 282–3; Haylā-Sellāsē, *Heywālē-na*, II: 155–6. *Wäyžāro* Wäyneshāt Bāshahwerād graciously gave me access to a letter that he wrote to his family on the very day of the incident, with his hands in chains, making arrangements for his financial and other affairs. See US 765.84/5238 for a letter to the American secretary of state co-signed by the presidents of Muskingum College and the student council protesting against the murder of Bāshahwerād, and Senedu Gäbru, *YäLebé Mātshaf* (1942EC): 35, for a picture of Bāshahwerād in chains.

⁶⁹ Samples of both are found in US 811.42784/44, Mäkonnen Dästa to Alling, 31.12.32; Engeda to Alling, 4.1.33; Mäkonnen Haile to Mälaku, 21.9.31. See also US 811.42784/17, Lardner to Murray, 1.10.30; and files 18, 19, 26, 36, 42, 52, 66; US 884.002/26, Southard to Sec. of St., 12.1.33; *BS*, 13.10.32.

⁷⁰ Apparently, some were prepared to go so far as to allege that even Tāfāri's father, *Ras* Mäkonnen, was 'privately' a Catholic: Wārquenāh Diary: 237.

Two personalities spearheaded the new drive to win adherents: Justin de Jacobis in northern Ethiopia and Guglielmo Massaja in the south. The first headed the Lazarists and the second the Capuchins. Towards the end of the century, the French André Jarousseau acceded to Massaja's apostolic seat, with Harär as his headquarters. Jarousseau developed a special relationship with Täfäri, largely arising from the fact that one of his priests, *Abba Samuél*, had tutored Täfäri in his childhood. *Abba Samuél* was more than a tutor; he was mentor and friend and his death in a drowning accident at Lake Aramaya in 1915, when Täfäri himself narrowly escaped, was to leave Täfäri with a strong sense of bereavement. But Täfäri's links with Jarousseau, or *Abba Endryas* as he was more popularly known, survived the death of *Abba Samuél* and the bishop continued to proffer counsel after Täfäri came to central political power in 1916.⁷¹

Illustration of how Täfäri's opponents were eager to use his Catholic associations against him is found in a letter that one of the Catholics wrote to Jarousseau in 1926, soon after the death of the Orthodox archbishop, *Abunä Mattéwos*, dissuading the Catholic prelate from making his projected trip to the capital. He urged:

ዛሬ ግዜም አይደል አልጋ ወራሽንም ከሰራቸው ላይ የሚያገኝት ነው አርሰዎንም
ወጥመድ የሚያገባ ነው። እንዲያውም ሰበብ ይፈልጉብናል እንኳን እንዲህ ያለ ሆኖ
ዛሬ አዲስ አበባ ጳጳስ የለ ባይሆን ጳጳስ ባለ ጊዜ አንዴ ደርሰው ለመምጣት አንደሆን
ነው እንጂ ለመቀመጥ አማይሆን ነው። ... ምናልባት አንድ የሚወደን ሰው ያለ እን
ዳይመሥላም ትንሽ ሰበብ ቢያገኙ ደማችንን ቢጠቡ ነው የሚወዱት ያገራን ሰው
አመል እኔ አውቀዋለሁ ብዬ ነው ይሄን ወረቀት ደናራ መጻፊ።

The time is not opportune for such a visit. It would be injurious to Täfäri's position and would also put you in a trap. They are only looking for a pretext. There is no Orthodox archbishop now. Even when there is one, you should make only a short visit, and not stay long. Do not imagine that we have got even one friend here. They would be happy to suck our blood if they could find the slightest excuse. I know my countrymen; that is why I have taken the liberty to write to you like this.⁷²

What inspired such anti-Catholic agitation was above all the prominence that a group of francophone Catholics had come to have in Täfäri's government in the 1920s. Of these, perhaps the most notable and generally regarded as the doyen of the Catholic group was Wäldä-Maryam Ayyälä. He started his career as interpreter successively to the French adminis-

⁷¹ Haylä-Sellásé, *Heywätlä-na*, I: 4, 25; MAE, GUERRE 1914-1918/1622, De Coppet to Briand, 22.2.17; Aleme Eshete, 'The Influence of the Capuchin Catholic Bishop of Harär (1900-40), Mgr. André Jarousseau, on Taffäri Mäkonnen, later Emperor Haile Selassie', paper prepared for the conference of the Historical Society of Ethiopia (1973). For Täfäri's cordial relations with the Lazarists, see *Annales* (1930): 370, 371. See *Annales* (1912): 258, for a brief history of Lazarist activity in northern Ethiopia.

⁷² IES Ms. 1599, Märsha Nahu Sämay to *Abuna Endryas*, 20.11.19/27.7.26.

tration in Djibouti and the French legation in Addis Ababa. From the latter post, he was co-opted by Täfäri to head the department of government contracts. He rose to attain the prestigious rank of *blattén gēta* and the director-generalship of the Ministry of the Interior in July 1929. In the latter capacity, he negotiated the purchase of the first aeroplane for Ethiopia. In 1935, he replaced Täklä-Hawaryat as minister in Paris and Geneva. In 1936, he went over to the Italian side.⁷³

Closely associated with Wäldä-Maryam was Asbä Haylu. A native of Ankobar, he embraced Catholicism after marrying the Ethiopian ex-wife of Count Pietro Antonelli, the architect of Italian policy in Ethiopia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Asbä attained fame through his eloquent championing of the cause of the *gäbbar* in the columns of *Berhanena Sälam* and in Ethiopia's first parliament, to which he had been elected as deputy.⁷⁴

Another prominent Catholic was Gäbrä-Egziabhér Dästa, more commonly known as Gäbrä-Egziabhér François. Educated in the French Catholic mission in Harär, he started his illustrious career as director-general of Dire Dawa customs in 1918 under *Näggadras* Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ. He then moved on to become director-general of Addis Ababa customs in 1924. It was then that he embarked on the rationalization of customs collection that was to be his greatest contribution to the evolution of modern administration in Ethiopia. He was interned in Italy during the occupation, was appointed minister of communications in 1941, and died in October 1943.⁷⁵

Ayyälä Gäbré, who started his career as the station master of Miesso, between Awash and Dire Dawa, held the directorships of Dire Dawa customs and of the municipality of Addis Ababa before he was promoted *blatta* and chief judge of the special court in 1932. A few months before that, he had been discharged from his duties as director of the Addis Ababa municipality on charges of embezzlement, a situation that the American minister attributed to the machinations of the Orthodox intelligentsia led by Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld and Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes.⁷⁶

Also very closely associated with the emperor was Täsfayé Tägañ. He served as *chargé d'affaires* in Paris, director-general in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the emperor's official interpreter.⁷⁷ Berhanä Marqos, described by the American consul as 'one of the ablest, shrewdest and best

⁷³ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 67; *Feré Kānafer*: 38; FO 371/13840, Barton to Henderson, 19.10.29; MAE NS3, Wäldä-Maryam to Brice, 14.6.10; US 701.8451/7, Engert to Sec. of St., 24.10.35; oral informant Dr Ammanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé.

⁷⁴ Oral informants Tserha Asbä (his daughter) and Surafel Haylé.

⁷⁵ Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 93; Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Ché Bälāw*: 87; US 884.00/223, Southard to Sec. of St., 17.8.31. See US 884.404/26, Southard to Sec. of St., 5.12.29, for a list of Catholics in prominent positions.

⁷⁶ US 884.05/21, Southard to Sec. of St., 11.7.32; US 884.00/231, Southard to Sec. of St., 23.2.32. For a similar incident involving Gäbrä-Egziabhér François in 1923 and again in 1931, see US 884.00/223, Southard to Sec. of St., 17.8.31.

⁷⁷ Zervos: 117; John Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay* (1984): 14.

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educated men in Abyssinia',⁷⁸ started as interpreter at the Franco-Ethiopian railway, rose to become director-general of posts, telephones and telegraphs, and ended up as chargé d'affaires in Turkey at the outbreak of the war. Like most of his Catholic colleagues, he went over to the Italians during the occupation.⁷⁹

Two other Catholics closely associated with postal administration were Bälachäw Yadäté and Berru Goshu. Before he succeeded Berhanä as director-general of posts in 1934, Bälachäw had served as interpreter to the British at their consulate in Harär and their legation in Addis Ababa as well as secretary to the Ethiopian controller of the railway (*Lej* Mäkonnen Endalkachaw) in 1923 and eventually as controller. Berru, a native of Ankobär and a product of the French Catholic mission at Harär, was employed at the PTT office from the year of its establishment in 1908. He worked in the Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa offices for over two decades. But his main claim to historical distinction lies in his being at the centre of a movement for constitutional reform.⁸⁰ Finally, to conclude this survey of the Catholic group, there was Taddäsä Mäshäsha, described by the American minister in 1929 as 'one of the King's [i.e. *Negus* Täfäri's] most influential private secretaries'.⁸¹

⁷⁸ US 884.01/2, Park to Sec. of St., 17.3.27.

⁷⁹ US 884.404/26, Southard to Sec. of St., 5.12.29; Zervos: 120, 280; Jean d'Esme, *A travers l'empire de Menelik* (1928): 123–35.

⁸⁰ Zervos: 280; US 884.404/26, Southard to Sec. of St., 5.12.29; Eshatu Tabaja, 'Tactics and Strategy of the Ethiopian Patriotic Struggle (1935–41)', BA thesis (AAU, 1982): 44–5.

⁸¹ US 884.404/26, Southard to Sec. of St., 5.12.29; MPA 335, note by Taddasa Mahsasha, n.d.

Five



Independence, Efficiency & Equity

Education usually has dual effects: the acquisition of clearly defined skills and the broadening of social and political awareness. The history of modern education in Ethiopia conforms to this general pattern. Exposure to Western forms of education – sustained or sporadic, formal or informal, as the case may be – produced not only clerks and accountants, department heads and directors-general, but also intellectuals who woke up to a disturbing awareness of their country's backwardness and became committed to the introduction of reforms as the sole guarantee of their country's independent existence. Their recommendations for reform encompassed the whole gamut of social and political life, ranging from scientific historiography to linguistic standardization, from alleviation of the conditions of the peasantry to the rationalization of customs collection, from the eradication of slavery to greater participation for women. Above all, they argued for the expansion of educational facilities, so that others could also have access to the light that they were able to see. Before we proceed to look at each of these in some detail, we shall consider how some of them perceived the challenges the country faced in general at the beginning of this century.

General perceptions

A common experience of the intellectuals was an awareness of their country's backwardness compared with the Western countries they had had the chance to visit. Perhaps in no other case was that realization as shocking and its expression as strident and unsparing as in that of Wärqenäh during his first visit to Ethiopia in 1899. His reactions at this stage of his career fit more into the genre of the disparaging traveller rather than the concerned citizen. In the privacy of his diary, Wärqenäh was to confide his harshest judgement of his countrymen, accusing them of 'blind conservatism' and

‘utter want of energy’. He deplored their ‘lethargy’, which permitted Europeans and Indians to make profit ‘under their very noses & in most cases with the Abyssinian capital’. After expressing his shame at ‘being their countryman’, he heaped on Ethiopians a catalogue of the worst possible attributes that any nation could be charged with and concluded with an apposite statement couched in the form of an aphorism: ‘The country is beautiful but the man is vile.’¹

For most others, the realization of their country’s backwardness came when they went abroad. Täklä-Hawaryat’s disillusionment with his country began at Djibouti on his way to Russia and attained its peak after he reached his destination. In Djibouti, he wrote in his masterly prose, he perceived his country’s malady; in Russia, he discovered its cure. ‘I could see’, he concluded, ‘that my countrymen would face certain humiliation unless they modernized.’² He returned with unbridled enthusiasm and lots of ideas of reform. But his hopes were soon dashed to the ground as he met one obstruction after another. This left him in a state of ambivalence. Should he not concentrate on improving his own personal life rather than battling the insurmountable odds against national reform? On the other hand, which single passenger can feel safe sitting in a ship being tossed around by a storm? Ethiopians, he concluded reluctantly, had been more adept at destroying than at building. One could search in vain for an Amharic word for ‘progress’. Robbery and murder are equated with heroism and honour, litigation with knowledge.³ As he reflected during the post-1941 period, he came to the following disturbing conclusion:

እንደዚህ ጊዜ ሳሰበው ምናልባት ሌሎች የሠለጠኑ ሕዝቦች ጥቂት ዘመን
አስተዳድረውንና አሠልጥነውን ቢሆን ይሻል ኖርዋግ? አያልኩ ራሴን
አስከመጠየት አደርሳለሁ። እንግሊዞች ካንድ ሁለት ጊዜ አጋጣሚ አገኝተው
ነበር። ግን ለመርዳት ስላልፈለጉ ምንም ሳያጽፏሙ ከአገር ወጥተው ሂዱ።

Sometimes, I ask myself, would it have been better if the civilized nations had colonized us for a short period of time? The British had that opportunity twice [i.e. in 1868 and 1941]. But, because they were not prepared to help, they left the country without setting up anything.⁴

Gäbrä-Heywät put the whole question of Ethiopia’s backwardness in a broader, global perspective. After listing the small number of countries that had escaped the sway of Europe and the United States – Japan, Turkey, China, Siam (Thailand) and Ethiopia – he concluded that all these countries, save Japan, were actually exercising sham independence. Then he went on to elaborate on the case of Ethiopia in one of his most memorable passages:

¹ Wärgenäh Diary: 32–4, 66. See also FO 371/12339, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 19.1.27, for Wärgenäh’s continued expression of frustration, though clearly in more tempered tones.

² Unpublished Autobiography, I: 168.

³ *Ibid.*: II: 96; Introduction: 16.

⁴ *Ibid.* Given his record of implacable opposition to the Italian occupation, such a consideration is a measure of his disenchantment with the country’s state of affairs.

እስቲ አሁን እኛ የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ አርነት አለን ሊባል ነውን፤ አርነት ያለው
ሕዝብ ግለት እውነተኛ ትርጉሙ ለብቻው መንግሥት ያለው ሕዝብ ግለት ብቻ
አይደለም፤ ራሱንም የቻለ ሕዝብ ግለት ነው እንጂ። የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ እስከ
ዛሬ ድረስ ገና ራሱን አልቻለም።

Can one really say that we Ethiopians are independent? Independence does not consist in merely having one's own government. It presupposes self-sufficiency. And the people of Ethiopia have yet to be self-sufficient.⁵

Yet Gäbrä-Heywät stands apart from most of the other intellectuals: he was arguing not so much for the adoption of Western ways and modes as for an autochthonous path of development. He bewailed the destruction of the country's cottage industry by the wholesale import of European clothing, household utensils and even ploughshares. Indigenous crafts that had been passed on from generation to generation were dying under the assault of Western manufactured goods. The completion of the railway could only make the catastrophe total. As a result, a generation of Ethiopians had arisen which had come to cherish comfort but did not always have the means to attain it. He warned:

ደኅናውን መንገድ መንግሥት ለከቶ ካልሰጠውና ካላሳየው ግን እንደዚህ ያለ
ጌጥና ምቹ ኑሮ የግዴድ ሕዝብ መጨረሻው ከፋ ነው። ብዙ ነገር ይለምዳል፤
ነገር ግን የለመደውን ነገር ለማድረግ ዐትም ያጣል።

Unless the government gives it proper guidance, the fate of such a people which loves glamour and comfort can only be disastrous. It acquires many tastes, but does not have the ability to satisfy them.⁶

The challenge of the West had another dimension. Ethiopia had to devise an intelligent way of exploiting its own rich resources lest they fall into the covetous grasp of the imperialist powers. Ethiopians could not live in blissful ignorance as of old, one anonymous writer argued. The country's natural and human resources, hitherto unknown and unquantified, now lay bare and exposed to the vying powers. The solution, he reasoned, was therefore 'to fight knowledge with knowledge, wisdom with wisdom, cunning with cunning, fire with fire'.⁷ In a similar vein, Täklä-Hawaryat condemned the practice of giving mining concessions to foreigners as 'exchanging pure gold for dubious money, mortgaging the fortunes of future generations'.⁸ In this context, one could also cite Yoftahé Negusé's play *Meseker*, in which Ethiopia is chided for 'being gold-laden and yet backward'.⁹

Sometimes, the appreciation of national values slips into the nostalgic

⁵ Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ, *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädädär* (1953EC): 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 80.

⁷ Märmero *Tämäramro Yätashälawen Mängüd Lämäyaz* (1916EC): 15.

⁸ Unpublished Autobiography I: 169.

⁹ Quoted in Mulugeta: 38.

glorification of the past that has been a predominant streak of the Ethiopian character. *Aläqa Tayyā* epitomizes this trend in a passage which contrasts the former grandeur of Ethiopia with its contemporary state. As so often, his point of departure is Herodotus's Ethiopia, which he erroneously equates with historic Ethiopia. 'Such a beautiful country and an object of admiration for foreigners', he goes on pensively, 'has now become the citadel of bloodshed, injustice, evil and shame because her unity has been destroyed through discord.'¹⁰ Yet, to be fair to Tayyā, he does make the connection between the contemporary predicament of the country and its failure to make necessary adjustments: 'She [i.e. Ethiopia] could not bring herself to seek wisdom from the wise. She preferred to stand in her former state, like a broken car. As a result, she lost even the knowledge and power that she had before.'¹¹

Täklä-Hawaryat, like Gäbrä-Heywät, often showed the capacity to go deeper into structural considerations. He used the term 'feudal' to describe the nature of Ethiopian society. This he did not only in his memoirs, which would not have been surprising as they were written many decades after the events described, but also in ministerial deliberations in the 1930s. The term was employed to signify the fragmentation of imperial authority. 'Reform and organization is conceivable', he insisted, 'only if the country's resources and power are under the control of the emperor, ... if the nobility are barred from having their own armies.'¹² *Käntiba* Gäbru, on the other hand, saw the nobility as complementary rather than antithetical to the emperor, whom they were to serve as 'pillars of counselling'.¹³

This consultative role that Gäbru envisaged for the nobility is given even more elaborate expression by Afäwärq. In a letter to Emperor Haylä-Sellasé written a few months before the promulgation of the 1931 constitution, which co-opted the hereditary nobility into a rubber-stamp parliament, Afäwärq obliged by endorsing the wisdom of gradual reform. He then went on to urge the setting up of two advisory councils of 15 members each, the first composed of foreign-educated Ethiopians and the second of local dignitaries. They were to engage in parallel but independent deliberations, the results of which were to be communicated to the emperor in writing. With characteristic cunning, Afäwärq reassured the emperor that, if anything went wrong, the blame would fall on the advisers rather than on the emperor himself.¹⁴

Close, almost intimate, rapport with imperial authority also characterized the reformism of Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé. The gradualist approach was more inherent and authentic in his case than in that of Afäwärq, who

¹⁰ *Aläqa Tayyā*, trans. Grover Hudson and Tekeste Negash, *Yälyoſtya Hezb Tarik. History of the People of Ethiopia by Aläqa Tayyā Gäbrä Maryam* (1987): 96.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² MPA 361, minutes of meeting of Council of Ministers, 30.12.24/5.9.32; Unpublished Autobiography, II: 23.

¹³ MPA, Gäbru to Wäldä-Mäsqäl, 10.9.22/18.5.30, writing soon after the death of Empress Zäwditu and the assumption of imperial power by Täfäri as Haylä-Sellasé.

¹⁴ MPA, Afäwärq to Haylä-Sellasé, 23.6.23/30.2.31.

had the habit of assuming positions as circumstances dictated. While S. Tedeschi's assertion that Heruy represents a reversal of the Enlightenment experience of philosophers influencing kings¹⁵ is probably pushing things too far, it is none the less true that caution was the hallmark of Heruy's philosophy. This approach comes out with unmistakable clarity in the preface to his major reformist tract, *Addis Alām*. 'The main message of this book', the author assures the reader, 'is to reform some mistaken customs, and not to harm any one or to promote self-interest.'¹⁶

Such was the general thrust of the intellectuals' reflections on the fate of their country. With this as a backdrop, we shall now turn to consider in detail their specific ideas on foreigners and foreign powers, political economy, administrative and social reform, education, history and historiography, and language and literature.

Foreigners & foreign powers

The historic victory of Adwa in 1896 was a resounding affirmation of Ethiopia's independence. But it did not completely solve the nature of the relationship that the country was to have with the outside world, and above all with Europe. By the end of the nineteenth century, it had become quite evident that Ethiopia could not exist in splendid isolation. Its circumscription by European colonies gave the whole question urgency and palpability. The large influx of foreigners into Ethiopia after Adwa also raised the question of how to relate to them and how to handle them. Conversely, the increasing number of Ethiopians who went abroad, mostly to Europe, and returned with some form of exposure to Western education or at least Western ways and habits kept the issue of Ethiopia and the West very much alive. Indeed, the whole gamut of reforms that the intellectuals championed could be viewed within the rubric of Ethiopia and the West, as it was the West which constituted the terms of reference for intellectual discourse.

The euphoria attending the Adwa victory had not even subsided before some of the intellectuals began to warn of the precarious nature of Ethiopia's independence. Foremost among these intellectuals was Gäbrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam. As an Eritrean with a pronounced sense of Ethiopian patriotism, he felt the incompleteness of the Adwa victory (i.e. its failure to liberate Eritrea) with particular bitterness. That loss meant not only the amputation of a vital part of historic Ethiopia but also the loss of independent access to the sea.¹⁷ Nearly 40 years later, the dangers inherent in the territorial encirclement of Ethiopia by colonial powers was underlined by Ashäber Gäbrä-Heywät (Acheber Gabré-Hiöt), who argued

¹⁵ Tedeschi: 83. Equally untenable is the contrast that Tedeschi draws between the radicalism of Afäwäraq and the gradualism of Heruy.

¹⁶ Heruy Wäldä-Sellase, *Addis Alām. YäQenochena YäDäg Adragiwoch Mänorya* (1925EC): 3.

¹⁷ IES Ms. No. 2171, 'Ze Mätshaf': 1, 47, 56; see also Tekeste, 'Blatta Gebre Egziabeher': 1-21.

for 'deux fenêtres au moins, une sur la Mer Rouge, l'autre sur l'Océan Indien, deux fenêtres libres de tout contrôle'.¹⁸ For his father, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ, however, the danger lay not so much in the territorial losses of the past as in the failure to reform and modernize in the future. He concludes his powerful piece, 'Até Menilek-na Ityopya', with an appeal to the young heir to the throne, Iyyasu, to shoulder the responsibility of leading the country along the path of Westernization, for failure to do so was bound to entail disintegration and enslavement.¹⁹

The option of closer alliance with one power to avert the danger of absorption by any other was considered by Atsmä-Giyorgis. In a very frank letter that he wrote to *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis in January 1910, Atsmé draws attention to the covetous manner in which the Europeans had begun to regard Ethiopia. In 1868, he recalls, the British were unimpressed by the country and left it after they had managed to penetrate as far as Mäqdäla. Now, however, the situation had changed dramatically. Thanks to the efforts of Menilek and his lieutenants like Habtä-Giyorgis, Ethiopia had developed into an attractive maiden exciting the lustful admiration of the European powers, including the British.

Hence the need, Atsmé argued with apparent contradiction, for a protector (*mezé*, best man, was the actual word he used) until Ethiopia could stand on her own and find 'her legitimate husband'. And no power qualified for that position better than Ethiopia's old and true friend (*mogzät*, custodian), France. Let us have no illusion, Atsmé went on, that the future battle for independence would be like the previous one (i.e. Adwa). Nor would it suffice to entrust one's fate to God. To drive his point home, he resorted to Italian folklore, reciting the story of a shepherdess who jumped over a precipitous cliff to escape from the amorous advances of a fellow shepherd. She survived because St Michael spread his wings for her. Next time, as she was playing hide and seek, she came to the familiar spot and jumped down in all confidence; not even a trace of her was found.²⁰

Tedla Hailé, in spite of his francophone background, saw a special role for the British empire by virtue of the long boundary between Sudan and Ethiopia. But he was unambiguous on the question of Ethiopia's continued independence. The two countries, Tedla wrote, should sign a treaty of alliance and the British should cede the ports of Zeila and Berbera to Ethiopia.²¹

Frustration at the lack of progress could also move such stalwart patriots as Täklä-Hawaryat and Wärqenäh to consider, if only fleetingly, the desirability of a foreign mandate. We have already cited Täklä-Hawaryat's musings along these lines.²² In 1925, Wärqenäh, too, confided to British

¹⁸ *La vérité*: 65–6.

¹⁹ P. 354.

²⁰ IES Ms. No. 1599, Atsmé to Habtä-Giyorgis, 6.5.02/14.1.10.

²¹ 'Pourquoi et comment pratiquer une politique d'assimilation en Ethiopie', MA thesis (Anvers, 1930): 87–8.

²² See p. 100.

Foreign Office officials his exasperation at the obstructionism of the *abun* and the clergy. The only way out of the impasse, he ventured, might be a League of Nations mandate over the country, preferably exercised by two or three powers in order to deter Ethiopian resistance.²³ In view of his later total identification with the Fascist Italian aggressors, it is not much of a surprise that Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, too, evinced a preference for foreign rule. Not only did he write with exuberance about Mussolini's Italy and go to extraordinary lengths to vouch for its pacific intentions,²⁴ but he also hoped that it would exercise its civilizing mission by occupying Ethiopia for a limited period of time. He confided to an Italian diplomat that, once that mission was accomplished, the Italians would not be allowed to linger on, for the Ethiopians would get rid of them, just as the Americans freed themselves from English rule.²⁵

But, particularly in the early 1920s, Afäwärq could also be a passionate defender of Ethiopian independence, more specifically of its right to arm. While criticizing Iyyasu's successors for their failure to capitalize on the service they had rendered the Allied powers in overthrowing him, he at the same time pointed out the injustice of the restrictions on the import of arms placed on Ethiopia by the Tripartite powers (the United Kingdom, France and Italy); such imports were not to exceed 500 guns a year. 'Ethiopia', he argued, 'is no small chieftaincy [*abba qoro*], but an empire with an area of a million square metres ... How can a genuinely Christian and pacific nation that has existed in independence since before the birth of Christ be deprived of the means to defend herself?' Nor would these arms be merely for Ethiopia's benefit, he elaborated. A properly armed government would guarantee security to European traders and travellers. A state like that of Ethiopia committed to the eradication of slavery should be permitted a more liberal import of arms than had hitherto been the case.²⁶

Blatta Déréssa locates the blame for the poor state of Ethiopia's armament on Ethiopians themselves rather than on the foreign powers. The Adwa victory, he argued, should have inspired them to build arms and other factories. As in so many other instances, here too he cites the contrasting case of Japan, which had been able to attain industrial self-sufficiency.²⁷

Although not many of the intellectuals seem to have recorded their views on Ethiopia's entry into the League of Nations, the one or two who did so were clearly favourable. Although *Ras Kasa Haylu*, perhaps the most influential of the hereditary nobility, expressed consternation at the speed with which Ethiopia's admission was being processed and could only recommend nationwide prayers to avert the catastrophe that he feared would engulf the country,²⁸ *Käntiba Näsibu Zamanuél* and *Näggadras Zäwgä*

²³ FO 371/10877, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 9.9.25.

²⁴ *BS*, 16.5.29, 26.6.30, 4.2.32.

²⁵ Rouaud: 172. See p. 56 above.

²⁶ Afäwärq, *YäItyopäya Mängest Alga Wäraš wädä Jibouti-na wädä Aden Sihedu-na Simäläsu YäMängädachäw Akwahuan* (1915EC): 28–9.

²⁷ *BS*, 23.12.26.

²⁸ MPA, statement, n.d.

detailed their arguments for admission. Näsibu argued that entry into the League would earn Ethiopia respect, friendship and security, whereas staying out would not only expose the country to disrespect but also endanger its territorial integrity.²⁹ Zäwägä, who had been a member of the Ethiopian delegation that attended the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, argued along similar lines, pointing out that entry was an expression of statehood. By not entering the League, Ethiopia would be declaring in effect that it was ready to confront the 52 member states. Further, he went on, it would be a reversal of the policy of international collaboration set in motion by Menilek.³⁰

All the above should not give the wrong impression that the intellectuals were all too eager to collaborate with foreigners, even at the risk of jeopardizing the country's independence. On the contrary, they exhibited a sensitivity to the preservation of that independence and a strong resentment of the overbearing attitude of quite a few of the foreigners in Ethiopia – sensitivity and resentment which many foreign observers were wont to characterize as xenophobic. Although, as we have noted above, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ compared independent Ethiopia unfavourably with British-ruled Sudan and Italian-ruled Eritrea, this did not lead him to the conclusion that colonial rule was to be preferred to independence.

As a general rule, though, one might say that the less exposed an individual was to foreign education, the less equivocal he would be on the value of independence. Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat, graduate of Raguél, typified this attitude when, contrary to Gäbrä-Heywät's assessment of the Eritrean situation, he wrote that many Eritreans were actually lamenting their fate under the yoke of colonialism. A colonial subject, he elaborated in his characteristic allegorical style, is like a bird kept in a cage in pomp and luxury in order to have its plumes plucked.³¹

When it came to individual foreigners, few of the intellectuals waxed enthusiastic about them. Although he could understand the use of foreign technical advisers, Täckä-Hawaryat found the appointment of foreigners like the Syrian Hasib Ydlibi to administrative positions highly exasperating.³² *Käntiba* Gäbru complained about the effrontery of a foreigner who appeared in his *chelot* (court) with his hat on and his hands in his pocket, and the case of another foreigner who reneged on the 60,000 dollars credit that he had obtained from an Ethiopian merchant.³³ As so often, it was with Afäwärq

²⁹ MPA, Näsibu to Zäwditu & Täfäri, 28.11.15/4.8.23.

³⁰ MPA, Zäwägä memo, 29.11.15/5.8.23.

³¹ BS, 7.10.26

³² Täckä-Hawaryat, Unpublished Autobiography, I: 381. Ydlibi had started as a rubber concessionaire in western Ethiopia at the beginning of the century and later rose to become a favoured confidant of Iyyasu, who appointed him governor of Gambella and *näggadras* of Dire Dawa: see Bahru Zewde, 'Concessions and Concession-Hunters in Post-Adwa Ethiopia: The Case of Arnold Holz', *Africa* (1990): 367–8; Bahru, 'Relations,' pp. 140, 390–404. I have recently had the good fortune of getting to know Ydlibi's grandson, Cyril Scott, who has brought to my knowledge a manuscript biography of Ydlibi by his daughter (and Scott's mother), May Louiso Ydlibi.

³³ BS, 1.9.27. See BS, 29.9.27, for an unduly over-defensive response by *Käntiba* Näsibu Zamanuél, to whom, as mayor of Addis Ababa, the letter about the conduct of foreigners

that the castigation of foreigners in Ethiopia attained rare eloquence. His satirical *Guide* has an interesting exchange between the author and his foreign companion. Asked about the nature of the foreigners resident in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian guide replies:

.... ታንጽንዶች ሰዎች በቀር አበሻ የሚመጡቱ ሁሉ ፈረንጆች አንኳን ያገራቸውን
ብልህትና ሰራት ለኛ ያስተምሩና ለራሳቸውም አያውቁት። ወዲያው ያበሻን መሬት እን
ደረገጡ ገና ወደመሀል አበሻ ሳይነሱ በፊት ታገራቸው የተማሩትን ሁሉ ተባክሩ ዳር
ጥለውት ነው የሚነሡ።
- እውነት? ስለምን?
- ግን ያውቃል ጌታው! ተጉዞ ላይ ሸከመ እንዲይከብዳቸው ይሆን ይሆናል።

... with the exception of a few, the foreigners who come to Ethiopia themselves know scarcely any of their country's skills and manners, let alone to be able to impart it to us. No sooner do they set foot on Ethiopian soil than they cast away on the coast all that they have learned in their country.

Foreigner: Is that really so? I wonder why.

Ethiopian: Who knows, Sir? Maybe they want to travel with light baggage.³⁴

On another occasion, he tackled the case of those foreigners who, he explained, gave vent to their frustration at being denied jobs or concessions in Ethiopia by writing slanderous and vituperative articles on the country. He selected for special ridicule their claim that Ethiopia was full of robbers, by contrasting the Ethiopian with the Western case:

ባገራችን ሌላና ወንበዴ ቢኖር አንኳ፤ አዩኝ አላዩኝ እያለ ቀን በደመና፤ ሌት ጨለማ
ለብሶ፤ ከበረሃና ከዱር ተሸሽጎ፤ የላሳና የሰነፈ ሰው ሲአገኝ ነው የሚቀማ፤ የሚሰርቅ።
የተማረና የሰለጠነ ፖሊስመን (ዘበኛ) በሞላበት አገር በኤውሮፓና ባመራካ አገር ግን፤
በየጊዜው በጋዜታ እንደምናየው፤ ወንበዴና ቀማኛው ቀናለቀን ሽጉጡን መዞ ተከተማው
መሀል ከየባንኩ እየገባ፤ የባንክ ሹማምንትና ሠራተኞች ሁለት እጃቸውን እንዳምራ ከገን
ፍ ወደሰማይ እንዲዘርሩ እያንገራገረ፤ ያለውን ሁሉ ገንዘብ ዘርፎና አግጦ ይሄዳል።

Even if we accept that there are thieves and robbers in our country, they are of the type who commit crime stealthily, under the cover of cloud during the day and under cover of dark at night, hiding in the desert and in the forests, and choosing the weak and the unwary as their victims. But as we read so often in the papers, in the West, in spite of its trained and sophisticated police force, the robber attacks in broad daylight, brandishing his gun in the center of town, storming into banks and forcing bank officials and clerks to hold their hands up like the wings of a crow, and emptying the coffers.³⁵

³³ (cont.) in the capital was addressed.

³⁴ G.J. Afework, *Ityopya. Guide du voyageur en Abyssinie* (1908): 223.

³⁵ BS, 26.9.29.

An editorial of *Berhanena Sälam* highlighted the case of a foreign expert who asked to be paid 75,000 berr to translate some of the more important foreign books into Amharic. The Amharic language, the editor argued, had proved intractable even to its native speakers, let alone to a foreigner whose knowledge of the language was rather suspect. The expert was obviously planning to employ some Ethiopians, give them a paltry sum for their troubles and pocket the rest. 'As if all the monopolies foreigners have come to enjoy were not enough,' the piece went on, 'we now have someone who wishes to monopolize our language.' The editor hoped that the commission set up to examine the matter would see it in its proper light, expressing a lingering anxiety, however, lest, as had so often been the case, the nation's wealth tilt towards the alien rather than the national.³⁶

Resentment of foreign influence and control reached its peak on the question of the ecclesiastical domination that the Coptic Church had exercised over the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for over a millennium, particularly with regard to the issue of the consecration of bishops. In the late 1920s there was what looked like a concerted campaign by the contributors of *Berhanena Sälam* and the other weekly, *A'mero*, for an autocephalous church. An article entitled 'An independent church for an independent state' appeared in the latter paper and was reproduced in *Berhanena Sälam* (17.2.27). It detailed the disappointing record of the Alexandrian connection, with scarcely anything to its credit: no churches, no schools, no hospitals, not even a cemetery, and above all no publication of religious books. The Täfäri Mäkonnen Press, the article went on, had published more books in the few years of its existence than the Egyptian heads of the Ethiopian church in so many centuries. When *Berhanena Sälam* invited contributions to debate the issue, it received 32 articles in favour of an independent church and only two against.³⁷

Once again, it was Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus who articulated with unsurpassable brilliance what so many felt was wrong. He went to the root of the matter by questioning the legal basis of the arrangement. The *Fetha Nägäst*, the traditional legal code, which sanctioned that arrangement, was actually first written by a certain Ibn al-Assal, who seems to have concocted the formula of Ethiopian ecclesiastical subservience to the Alexandrian church as some sort of delayed revenge for Ethiopian subjugation of Egypt in Pharaonic times. Thus, not only were Ethiopians denied the right to elect their own archbishop, but the archbishop, who was appointed by Alexandria, was also stripped of any powers to consecrate bishops under him. And yet, ironically, the Egyptian *abun* had been granted extensive *gult* by the Ethiopian state. Afäwärq then went on in unremitting satire:

የአስከንድርያ ክህናት ብቻ ጥዋትና ግታ ከአገዛዚብሔር ቆይታ ያደርጋሉን፤ ወይስ

ለነሱ ብቻ ከሥላሴ ጋር የሚነጋገሩበት የተሰየ በውጭ የተሠራ ሰልክ አላቸውን፤

³⁶ BS, 15.9.32.

³⁷ BS, 10.3.27.

Whoever said that the Alexandrian clergy alone enjoy a privileged audience with God every morning and evening? Or do they have a special telephone, made to order, through which they can communicate with the Trinity?³⁸

As it was, the campaign bore fruit before the end of the decade when, in 1929, four Ethiopian bishops were consecrated in Alexandria,³⁹ initiating a process that was to culminate in the consecration of the first Ethiopian patriarch in 1959.⁴⁰

In the field of secular ideology, in spite of the Bolshevik scare that featured so prominently in the correspondence of foreign legations and the detention in 1928 of Täklä-Hawaryat on charges of belonging to a Bolshevik conspiratorial ring, Bolshevism or the Russian revolution had few sympathizers or admirers among the Ethiopian intelligentsia at this stage. *Aläqa* Tayyā could be said to have provided us with a characterization of the Russian revolution typical of his generation when he wrote:

.... አሁንም በፅርቡ በዘመናችንም እጅግ ታላቅ ኃይልኛ የክብረ የዓለምን መንግሥታት ሁሉ ያስፈራ
ያስደነግጥም የነበረ ጀጅ ግሊዮን ሕዝብ ያለበት ብርቱ ሰፊ የሆነ የመስኮብ
መንግሥት የደክመና የጠፋ የጠላት መጫወቻ የሕዝብ መዘባበቻ የሆነ ከመሐከል ከተነሣ
ሁከትና ብጥብጥ መለያየትም ነው።

... It is through internal disturbance and squabble that, recently, the Russian government, which used to strike terror amongst world powers and had a population of 170 million people, was weakened and disintegrated and became the subject of public ridicule.⁴¹

The American minister, Southard, who, to his credit, was probably the only diplomatic representative who had managed to distance himself from the general hysteria about the spread of Bolshevism, was not too wide of the mark when he explained:

The Ethiopians are fanatically religious, are instinctively anti-foreign in social respects, are still more or less thoroughly committed to the feudal system under which they have for many centuries lived, and in practically all other ways are poor material for Bolshevism. There is no industrial development in the country and no resulting acute wage or cost of living problem of the sort which prepare the way for Bolshevik teaching.⁴²

But the Bolshevik scare affected Ethiopian officials as well, including some members of the intellectual community, like the mayor of Addis

³⁸ BS, 10.2.27. For British comments on the growing nationalist spirit of the time, see FO 371/14598, encl. in Barton to Henderson, 28.7.30.

³⁹ BS, 13.6.29, 4.7.29.

⁴⁰ See Adugna Amanu, 'The Ethiopian Orthodox Church becomes Autocephalous', BA thesis (HSIU, 1969), for a detailed discussion of the issue.

⁴¹ 1912 Ms., Tayyā Papers, Academy of Eth. Languages. See Kābbādā Tāsāmma, *YäTarik Mastawäsha* (1962EC): 60, for an almost identical appreciation of the Russian revolution by Ras Tāfäri during the anti-ministerial agitation of 1918.

⁴² US 884.00/B2, Southard to Sec. of St., 17.6.29.

Ababa, *Kāntiba* Nāsibu Zamanuél. In a letter to the new emperor, Haylä-Sellasé, presumably written on the eve of his coronation, Nāsibu details the precautionary measures that he planned to take against possible plots by Bolsheviks aimed at visiting foreign dignitaries or even the royal couple. He had identified 11 suspects: three Russians, five Greeks, two Armenians and one Czech. But since he had no valid grounds to take action against them, he was counting on strict surveillance of their movements and assignment of trustworthy attendants and assistants to the foreign visitors.⁴³

The fascination that Japan and the Japanese exercised in the imagination of the intellectuals contrasted with the strong resentment of Egyptian ecclesiastical domination and the apprehensions provoked by the Russian revolution. Japan was decidedly the model which almost all the intellectuals wanted to follow in transforming Ethiopia from the medieval to the modern age. Wārqnāh described how the Japanese understood the vital importance of reform for national survival and, acting with diligence and resolution, were able to achieve in a matter of 60 years what it had taken centuries for the Western countries to do so. Déréssa paid special tribute to the Japanese achievement in the fields of education and the dissemination of knowledge. Above all, Gābrä-Heywät concluded his *Até Menilek-na Ityopya* with a passionate call for Iyyasu to emulate the example of Japan:

የዛሬው የኢትዮጵያ ንጉሥ ሰራ እንደ የዱርቆ አይደለም። የዚህ ዓለም ንጉሥት በዱር
ዘመን ድንቁርና ነበረች። ሃሬ ገን የግትቻል ብርቱ ጠላት ተነሣችባት እርሰዋም የኤርጳ
አእምሮ ትግላለች። እርሰዋም ቤቱን የግዝፍት ክብረት ይጨምራል ቤቱን የግዝጋባት ገን
ይደመሰሳል። ኢትዮጵያችን የኤርጳን አእምሮ የተቀበለች እንደሆነ የግደፍራት ጠላት
የለም። ያልተቀበለች እንደሆነ ገን ትፈርሳለች ወደ ባርነትም ትግላለች። በዚህ ምክንያት
ከቡር ወልዑል የጤ ምኒልክ ወራሽ የጃፓን መንግሥት እንዴት እንዳደረገ አስመርምረው
መንገዱን እንዲከተሉት ተሰፋ አናርገ።

The task awaiting the present Ethiopian king is not like that of his predecessors. In the old days, Ignorance had held sway. Today, however, a strong and unassailable enemy called the European mind has risen against her. Whoever opens his door to her [i.e. European mind] prospers; whoever closes his door will be destroyed. If our Ethiopia accepts European mind, no one would dare attack her; if not, she will disintegrate and be enslaved. Hence, let us hope that His Highness Menilek's heir would examine and follow the example of the Japanese government.⁴⁴

What is more, Japan as a model of modernization was not merely confined to the realm of intellectual discourse; it had a clear and direct impact on policy. The 1931 constitution, in spite of some local adaptations, was clearly modelled on the Meiji constitution of 1889.⁴⁵ The minutes of a

⁴³ MPA 360/15, n.d. See Aleme Eshete, 'Ethiopia and the Bolshevik Revolution', *Africa* (1973): 1–27 and in particular pp. 11ff., for a discussion of the Bolshevik scare.

⁴⁴ Gābrä-Heywät, 'Até Menilek': 254.

⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this, see Bahru, 'The Concept of Japanization': 1–17.

meeting of the Ethiopian ministers with the emperor in January 1932 contain the following interesting revelation:

.... አማካሪዎቻችን ከልዩልዩ ሃገር የመጡ ሰለሆኑ ጣጉዱ መንግሥት አካሄድ ብንሄድ
ይኸላል ብለን አስታውቀን ጃንሆይም ሕገ መንግሥቱን ሰናቆም የሥራችንን አካሄድ
መሠረት ያደረገው ጃፓንን ሰለሆነና አሉም ዘመኑ ያልበዛ ታሪክ ሁሉ በቅርብ የሚገኝ
በንጉሡ ነገሥት መንግሥት የሚገዛ በሥልጣኔም ከአውሮፓች የተከከለ በመሆኑ ነውና
ለየሥራችሁ የሚያስፈልገውን ከሱ የሥራ ቤት ብትፈልጉ ይኸላል። ማለትን
ላላስታውቁን ... እንደዚሁ እንሰራለን።

... [Instead of] having advisers from different countries, we [i.e the ministers] felt that we should follow the practices of one government. His Majesty informed us that we should seek guidance from the operations of the Japanese government since we have selected Japan as our model when we set up the constitution and since that country has a recent history [of modernization], is ruled by an emperor, and is equal to European states in its attainments. We shall therefore act accordingly.⁴⁶

Political economy

Most of the writings of the intellectuals of the period rarely went far beyond a description of the apparent ills of Ethiopian society. Even the powerful pen of Afäwärg, marked more by brilliance than by depth, scarcely managed to go to the economic roots of the problem. The task of putting the whole matter in the context of the country's political economy fell on the shoulders of Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ. And, under the circumstances, he did an admirable job of it. He was assisted to some extent by Mikael Täsämma, who, in the first months of 1929 while studying political science in Rome, wrote a series of articles on political economy in the columns of *Berhanena Sälam*.⁴⁷ But his contributions, which strike one as quite faithful translations of Italian works, pale in comparison with Gäbrä-Heywät's prodigious adaptation of liberal political economic theory to the Ethiopian reality.

Gäbrä-Heywät's *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädadär* easily stands out as the most profound theoretical work of the time. Its title, which in English can be rendered as 'Government and Public Administration', is something of a misnomer, for it does not directly deal with those two subjects. It has been suggested that Gäbrä-Heywät probably chose such a title because it had a better chance of appealing to the enlightened members of the ruling class than if it had reflected accurately its real content.⁴⁸ The book was published

⁴⁶ MPA 369, minutes, 23.5.24/2.2.32.

⁴⁷ See, for example, *BS*, 7.2.29, 14.2.29, 28.3.29.

⁴⁸ Ayyala Zäwgä, 'YäNäggadras Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ YäPolätikawi Ikonomi Astäsasäb,' *Maskaram* (1981): 88; Tenker Bongor, trans., *The Political Economy of Ethiopia c. 1910 (Government and Public Administration. Gabrahiwot Baykadagn)* (1992): xxiv.

posthumously by Gäbrä-Heywät's loyal and caring friend, Pawlos Mānamāno, with the financial support of *Ras* Tāfāri.⁴⁹

The linchpin of Gäbrä-Heywät's thinking is the labour theory of value. And he elaborates and illustrates the theory with a wealth of examples from the Ethiopian situation. The value of a commodity, he explained, in line with his classical mentors, is determined by the amount of labour time expended to produce it. Concomitantly, the value of a commodity declines with the refinement of the means of producing it. And this brings him to another important consideration: the centrality of knowledge (*ewqāt*) and education (*temheret*), rather diffuse categories which are better understood in the sense of technology. It is the edge that the European manufacturer has in 'knowledge' (i.e. technology) that reduces the Ethiopian peasant to paying with many days of labour for European glasses and bottles which are produced within minutes.⁵⁰ Almost imperceptibly, Gäbrä-Heywät glides from exposition to injunction:

ሰለዚህም ሕዝቡ እንዳይጉዳ የሚፈልግ መንግሥት ሁሉ አውራ ጥረቱ ትምርት እን
ዲበዛ ነው። ... ዕውቀት የሌለው ሕዝብ ሁሉ ለብቻው መንግሥት ቢኖረውም
ባይኖረውም ዕውቀት ያላቸው ሕዝቦች ይገዙታል። ... ብዙ ፈረንጆች ወደ ኢትዮጵያ
አገር ድኻ ሆነው መጥተው በቶሎ በልጽገው የኢትዮጵያን ሰው በሉሊነት የሚያሳድሩ
ሰለዚሁ ዕውቀታቸው ነው።

Thus, the main task of a government that wishes to protect its people [from unequal terms of trade] should be to expand education ... If a nation had no knowledge, it is immaterial whether it has an independent state or not, for it is bound to be ruled by a people with knowledge ... It is because they have knowledge that many Europeans come to Ethiopia in a state of poverty but manage to prosper in no time and end up having Ethiopians as their servants.⁵¹

Gäbrä-Heywät also lends his labour theory of value a clear social and political content when he writes that the national wealth can be expected to grow only when the consumers do not outnumber the producers, for feeding an unproductive person is a waste of resources. Merchants, as members of the non-producer class, do not enjoy any special favour with Gäbrä-Heywät: 'When there are too many merchants in a country, it does the public a lot of harm ... More merchants means more soldiers, more robbers.'⁵²

⁴⁹ *Māngest*: 9–10. As he writes in the preface, Pawlos actually had to put together the rather dispersed notes that Gäbrä-Heywät had left behind when he died in 1919. It is perhaps to the credit of Pawlos that he has managed to piece the notes together so well that the reader scarcely ever feels any jolting disconnections. Pawlos himself was a native of Däbrä Damo (Tegré), was educated in Asmara, was appointed Ethiopian consul in Jerusalem in 1927/8, and had represented Tāfāri in official missions to the United States twice, in 1920 and 1933. See *BS*, 5.3.34; *US* 884.24, Southard, 14.12.20; *US* 033.8411/Special Mission/16, Southard to Sec. of St, 8.6.33, 26.6.33.

⁵⁰ *Māngest*: 43–52.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 53.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 64–6.

Conversely, it is agriculture and the peasant that form his central concern. The promotion of agriculture, coupled with domestic industrialization, can be said to constitute his major recipe for development. He argued for a fair and equitable distribution of agricultural land as well as the guaranteeing of the right of the peasant to sell his plot. The latter, he reasoned, would give the peasant an incentive to invest in his land and thereby increase its value. At the same time, he cautioned that agricultural credit should be preceded by education and marketing facilities if it were not to be attended by the undesirable consequences of eviction and the concentration of land in the hands of a few.⁵³

Exchange is another important subject addressed by Gäbrä-Heywät and it naturally follows from his discussion of value. He points out the underlying need for currency because of the ultimate inadequacy of barter. After tracing the historical evolution of the means of exchange, from cattle (in ancient Greece) and slaves (Britain) to *amolé* or salt bars (Ethiopia), he shows how the world has finally arrived at a non-perishable basis of exchange through the use of silver and gold. He underlines also the importance of small change and pays tribute to Emperor Menilek for introducing smaller denominations of the Menilek thaler. At the same time, Gäbrä-Heywät draws the reader's attention to the fundamental role that exchange plays in the imbalance between manufacturing Europe and countries like Ethiopia that are dependent on the export of raw materials. Inasmuch as the value of processed goods is higher than that of raw materials, Europe would continue to enjoy a clear advantage in the reserves of gold and silver it has at its disposal.⁵⁴ Gäbrä-Heywät goes further into a discussion of the relative merits of the two precious metals, gold and silver, showing the fluctuations of the silver currency with the value of the metal as opposed to the relative stability of gold-based currency, and recommending the adoption of the gold standard by Ethiopia.⁵⁵

What gives life and vitality to money, Gäbrä-Heywät goes on, is circulation. Hoarding, therefore, can only be sterile. He estimates that of the total value of 100 million thalers said to exist in Ethiopia, only 20 million (i.e. 20 per cent) are in circulation; the remaining 80 per cent are probably either buried underground or being used as decorative pieces. Although Gäbrä-Heywät concedes the public utility of banks in facilitating the circulation of money,⁵⁶ he goes a step further and argues that money is more productive when it is invested rather than when merely deposited in a bank. In the conditions then prevailing in Ethiopia, putting your money in the bank could only benefit the foreign merchant and entrepreneur, for only they can afford to borrow money at the exorbitant interest rate that the bank was charging. Of the 1,220,850 thalers borrowed from the Bank of Abyssinia in the year 1913, only about 50,000 (i.e. less than 5 per cent)

⁵³ For a discussion of these issues, see Tenker: xii–xiv.

⁵⁴ *Mängest.*: 103–11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 158–63.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 123. See also Gäbrä-Mäsqäl Keflä-Egzi'e in *BS*, 26.10.33.

were borrowed by Ethiopians.⁵⁷ And such considerations bring him to one of the central themes of his treatise: that innovations are useless, or even downright injurious, if not attended by education:

እንገዲህ እንደ ምድር ባቡርና የጋሪ መንገድ ባንክም የሚጠቅም በሥራ የሚሰጠውን
ሕዝብ ነው ... የኢትዮጵያ መንግሥት ይህ [ሕዝብን በሥራ የማሰልጠን] ሐሳብ ከሌለው
ጥን የምድር ባቡርና ባንኩ ወዳገራችን አመጣጣቸው የኢትዮጵያን ሕዝብ መቃብር
ለመግስ እንደ ሆነ ጥርጥር የለውም።

We can thus conclude that railways, motor roads and banks can only benefit people trained in the requisite skills. ... Unless the Ethiopian government has plans to train its people in such skills, there is no doubt that the introduction of railways and banks into the country can only help to dig the grave of the Ethiopian people.⁵⁸

The Bank of Abyssinia could set the lending rate with impunity, Gābrä-Heywät reasoned rightly, because it enjoyed a banking monopoly in Ethiopia and could thus fear no competition. How ill-advised Menilek must therefore have been in granting such a monopoly in 1905. For, where there is no competition, self-interest runs rampant. Imagine what would happen if one person had a monopoly on the manufacture of arms. The banking monopoly is the most injurious of all the monopolies that foreigners had managed to acquire in Ethiopia (such as tobacco and alcohol) because it affects practically everybody. The bank's unattractive interest rate meant that it had been operating without profit since its establishment and there was little prospect of that situation changing. As a result, its shareholders had received no dividends to date.⁵⁹ Nor was Gābrä-Heywät particularly appreciative of the bank-like Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Trade set up by Empress Taytu in 1909, since he doubted the efficacy of an enterprise whose members joined it not out of conviction but for fear of censure for failing to join an association which counted royalty among its august members.⁶⁰

Gābrä-Heywät was not alone in drawing attention to the injurious effects of monopoly in business. An anonymous writer, who described himself as 'a friend of Ethiopia', expounded at length on the iniquity of the rubber monopoly, presumably the one granted by Menilek to Ydlibi in 1905. He wrote that a foreigner had the temerity to claim that he had discovered the rubber-yielding tree, when in fact Ethiopians had known its use for centuries. On the basis of that claim, however, he had managed to get a monopoly which had forced Ethiopian collectors of the produce to sell to him at one-sixth its market value and depleted government revenue from taxes by more than 75 per cent. The writer ended his exposé with an

⁵⁷ *Mängest*: 125–6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 127. See also *Aläqa Tayyā's* comparatively rather naive appreciation of the railway in *Aläqa Tayyā Papers*, Language Academy.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 140–7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 144–5.

impassioned plea to the Ethiopian authorities to read the Scriptures, for nowhere there is it written that one person should prosper at the expense of the general public.⁶¹

Given his premiss of unequal exchange between the industrialized and the non-industrialized world, it is to be expected that Gäbrä-Heywät would be more than sceptical of the value of foreign trade. As Ayyälä Zäwägä points out,⁶² the protectionist stance that Gäbrä-Heywät assumes on foreign trade is one of the things that sets him apart from classical liberal economists. But Tenker Bongor, in his introduction to the English translation of Gäbrä-Heywät's work, puts the matter in a different perspective, arguing that he can be regarded as 'one of the early theorizers of the dependency theory'.⁶³ The figures that Gäbrä-Heywät marshals in his arguments are compelling. He cites as an example 1912 figures to show how Ethiopia exported hides at the price of 3 *berr* per *färäsula* (1 *färäsula* = c. 17 kg) but had to buy back the processed leather at the rate of 200 *berr* per *färäsula*.⁶⁴ While he is slightly more indulgent towards domestic trade, Gäbrä-Heywät's final verdict on commerce can only be described as dismissive. 'When there are too many merchants and soldiers in a country, it is of no good either to the public or to the state,' he concludes. 'The real basis of national wealth is agriculture.'⁶⁵

These sentiments, which could be described as autarkic, are echoed by Täklä-Hawaryat, who, in a memo attached to the 1931/2 budget proposal, emphasized the great value of self-reliance. As finance minister, the thrust of his message was to warn of the danger of foreign loans and he underlined agriculture and crafts as the two pillars of national development.⁶⁶ *Blatta Déréssa* came up with a somewhat similar recommendation of cultivating frugal habits and using as much as possible locally produced goods in view of the increasingly unfavourable balance of trade which Ethiopia was experiencing.⁶⁷

Understandably, too, Gäbrä-Heywät does not give much favourable consideration to foreign investment. Déréssa, however, comes to a rather reluctant admission of the unavoidability of foreign investment, if only jointly with local investment.⁶⁸ The idea of joint ventures is dealt with more

⁶¹ J.I. Eadie, *An Amharic Reader* (1924): 112–16. The anonymous writer picks up the issue again in a subsequent piece (*ibid.*: 123), where he urges Ethiopians to wake up from their deep slumber and reclaim the natural wealth that a foreigner has swindled them out of. The identity of the writer is not known; internal evidence suggests that he might have been a foreigner. But his eloquent use of Amharic and the identity of his views with the intellectuals discussed in this book warrants his inclusion here. For the rubber monopoly, see Bahru, 'Relations': 390–7.

⁶² 'Gäbrä-Heywät': 94.

⁶³ Tenker: xix.

⁶⁴ *Mängest*: 67.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 126.

⁶⁶ MPA 369, memo, 29.2.24/9.11.32.

⁶⁷ *BS*, 11.2.32. A dissenting voice to this consensus was that of *Näggadras* Dästa Meteké, the one-time *käntäba* of Gondär, who argued (*BS*, 2.4.25) that Ethiopia stood to lose more than the foreign trading partners if she refused to continue to trade.

⁶⁸ *BS*, 5.4.28.

elaborately by Tedla Hailé, who argued that care should be taken to ensure that Ethiopians always had a majority shareholding in such enterprises. Accordingly, priority should be given to agriculture rather than to mining, which requires heavy inputs that Ethiopians can hardly afford. He recommended setting up a Société Générale Nationale, with the Ethiopian government holding half the shares and the other half being equally divided between foreign and local investors. The Société, which would be run by European and American experts employed on contract, was to be given an agricultural concession over a total area of about 1.5 million hectares, scattered in different parts of the country, for a period of 50 years. This society was to exist in happy symbiosis with the peasants, who would be organized into cooperatives and would enjoy medical, educational and communication facilities provided by the Société.⁶⁹

Tedla also makes some perceptive observations on the nature of feudalism in Ethiopia. Although there appears to have been general agreement, implicit or explicit, among the leading intellectuals that Ethiopian society could be described as feudal, few elaborate on the question. Gäbrä-Heywät barely mentions the term. Afäwärq focuses more on the pomp and pageantry of European feudalism than on the structural attributes of its Ethiopian variety.⁷⁰ We have already noted Tāklä-Hawaryat's observations.⁷¹ Even Emperor Haylä-Sellasé, as he reminisced over the struggle to promulgate the 1931 constitution, used the term 'feudal' to characterize the position of the hereditary nobility who were opposed to the constitution.⁷² But by far the most sustained and insightful discussion of feudalism came from Tedla Hailé, who drew a distinction between '*féodalité seigneuriale*' and '*féodalité "bourgeoise"*'.⁷³ From the ensuing discussion of the two terms, it emerges that Tedla was focusing on the political content of feudalism, i.e. the importance of the hereditary nobility in the former and their decline in the latter. Curiously enough, Tedla believed that seigneurial feudalism was terminated by Téwodros and Menilek and that what their successors did was to consummate that process. With greater insight, he highlights the *madbét* (literally 'kitchen'), the land that belonged to the palace, as the wedge that broadens royal prerogatives at the expense of the hereditary nobility. He recommends measures to reinforce this process, such as the replacement of the traditional titles like *qäññāzmach* and *fitawwari*, which denoted martial rather than administrative qualifications, with those like *abägaz* and *baldägaz*, and redrawing provincial boundaries to facilitate the process of assimilation, which remained a central preoccupation of his thesis. Somewhat inconsistently, he advocated the retention of such long-standing hereditary titles as *shum-agamé*, *shum-tämbén* and *wag-shum*.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Tedla, 'Pourquoi et comment,' pp. 52–8.

⁷⁰ See his article on the European Middle Ages, 'Medio evo', in *BS*, 25.7.29.

⁷¹ See p. 102 above.

⁷² Haylä-Sellasé, *Heywäté-na*, I: 148.

⁷³ Note that he puts the term bourgeois within quotes, apparently to draw the reader's attention to the irony of a bourgeois brand of feudalism.

⁷⁴ Tedla, 'Pourquoi et comment': 41–5.

Administrative efficiency

The rationalization of administration suggested by Tedla Hailé engaged the attention of the other intellectuals as well, particularly Tāklä-Hawaryat and Gäbrä-Heywät. The former's first major recommendation of reform was embodied in an administrative manual that he prepared soon after his second return from abroad. He envisaged the application of the manual on an experimental basis in a certain part of the country followed by its later extension to other parts, in a way anticipating the establishment of model provinces such as Chärchär, whose first governor Tāklä-Hawaryat was to become. He tried to impress the young ruler, Iyyasu, with his scheme. To his dismay, however, Tāklä-Hawaryat found that Iyyasu was more interested in frolicking with his Somali pals than in listening to the author's earnest reading of the manual. Interestingly enough, however, the emperor somewhat fleetingly suggested that he might try it out in Harär, after he had converted it into his *madbät*.⁷⁵ This is remarkable not only in view of Tedla Hailé's recommendation but also because of the fact that the only appealing aspect of the manual for Iyyasu was the very practical one of dislodging his rival, Täfäri Mäkonnen, from his hereditary fief.

One can also sense the hand of Tāklä-Hawaryat behind the reorganization of provincial boundaries recommended by a committee set up for the purpose. The most interesting feature of the recommendation was the division of the country into 14 provinces and the designation of Addis Ababa, Aksum and Gondär as imperial cities to be administered by *käntiba*. The recommended number of provinces was strikingly identical to that adopted in the final years of the Haylä-Selläsé regime (1941–74). There the similarity ends, however. For the provinces recommended in the report have little resemblance, in name or provincial boundary, to the post-1941 picture. Tegré was thus to be divided into two parts, to accommodate the interests of the two lines of Emperor Yohannes's successors, *Ras* Seyum and *Ras* Gugsa. Wällo, conforming more or less to tradition, was set apart from Yäjjü, Wag and Lasta. Most of the southern peoples were merged into one or other of six provinces on the basis of ethnic or linguistic affiliation (e.g. Käfa, Kullo, Konta), geographical juxtaposition (eg. Ilubabor, Gimira, Gura Färda, Wälläga-Qélläm) or the prevalent jurisdictional status (e.g. the late *Filawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis's fief).⁷⁶

Tāklä-Hawaryat followed up this scheme for provincial reorganization with an elaborate memorandum, in which he set down the principles of fair and equitable provincial administration and drafted a work schedule for the ideal provincial governor. Tāklä-Hawaryat argued for a change in the conception of the provincial governor, from *agärä gäzh* or *mesläné* to *endärasé*.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Tāklä-Hawaryat, Unpublished Autobiography, II: 335–41, 368, 383.

⁷⁶ MPA 361, committee report, 2.13.24/1.9.32.

⁷⁷ The significance that Tāklä-Hawaryat attaches to these terms is not clarified. But the implication is that the first two are associated with autocratic and exploitative rule, be it on one's own behalf or on behalf of the palace, whereas the third implies administration

The three guiding principles of good provincial administration, he continued, should be ensuring public prosperity, organizing an armed force and guaranteeing fair justice. Prosperity could only be ensured when the productive sector of society was assured of the rewards of its labour and was assisted by technological innovations which ease its burden and when circumstances which lead to litigation and hence dissipation of productive energy are eliminated. There are no half measures, he concluded. Either you are fully committed to modernization or you do not attempt it at all: 'Unless firm resolve is made to go on the path of modernization, tampering with the old customs can only end up confusing and alienating the public.'⁷⁸

In his work schedule for the provincial governor, Täklä-Hawaryat developed a three-year programme. In the first year, the governor was to determine the administrative subdivisions of his province, choose the site of his capital and evolve a master plan for it, and establish an armed force along modern lines. The second year was to be devoted to the promotion of agriculture by launching a cadastral survey and setting up model farms. The third was to be occupied with the encouragement of trade and crafts, granting concessions to exploit mineral and other natural resources, the institution of compulsory universal education and the provision of medical care. In the end, however, Täklä-Hawaryat did not seem to have had much confidence that these principles could be applied across the board at the outset. He opted instead for trying out the formulae in a small province 'where the price to be incurred through this experimentation will not be too high and where there are no long-entrenched traditions and practices'.⁷⁹

The quest for rational administration, although formulated in differing ways, was a universal preoccupation of the intellectuals. Gäbrä-Heywät dwelt at some length on the cardinal importance of what he called *serat*, which could be translated as 'order' or 'constitutional government'. This, he argued, is what distinguishes government of the civilized from that of the uncivilized. In the latter, the king is not only despotic but also identified with the government, as a result of which the death of a king is attended by a chaotic struggle for succession. He then concludes:

አለም ላለው ሕዝብ ሥራት የለውም ሥራትም የለው ሕዝብ የደለደለ ኃይል

የለውም የኃይል ምንጭ ሥራት ነው እንጅ የሠራዊት ብዛት አይደለም— ሥራት

ከሌለው በፊ መንግሥት ይልቅ በሕግ የምትኖር ትንሽ ከተማ ምናት ሥራሉን

A people without intelligence has no *serat*, and hence no secure power. The source of all power is *serat*, not the size of an army. A small town that is governed by law is to be preferred to a large nation that has no *serat*.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ (cont.) characterized by a sense of responsibility and social concern. It is again of interest, however, that the term *endärasé* begins to replace *agärä gäzh* or *täqalay agärä gäzh* in the last years of imperial rule, although one can argue with some reason that Haylä-Selläsé's *endärasé* were little more than glorified *mesläne*.

⁷⁸ MPA 361, 1.2.25/11.10.32. See also MPA 369, Getachäw Abatä, n.d.

⁷⁹ MPA 361. This is consistent with the line he had adopted in the recommendations he made in the manual submitted earlier to Iyyasu.

⁸⁰ 'Até Menilek': 341.

In his characteristically roundabout way, Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat identified good regulations as the key to development.⁸¹ Déréssa likewise saw organization as the basis of progress, citing the Addis Ababa customs office as a model of such organization.⁸² Another contributor to *Berhanena Sälam*, Astatqé Wäldä-Amanuél, urged the transformation of hereditary provincial governors into salaried appointees of the central government and cutting down their large and expensive retinue.⁸³ About the same time there also appeared an article in *Berhanena Sälam* that toyed with the idea of full ministerial powers and accountability.⁸⁴ Mälaku Bäyyan and Mikaél Täsämma turned their attention, respectively, to public hygiene and municipal administration. Mälaku wrote his letters from America on the importance of sanitation, arguing that independence is of little value if the public remains at the mercy of contagious diseases.⁸⁵ Mikaél claimed that more people were dying daily in Addis Ababa than in Western cities that were 10–60 times larger. He identified eight main functions of the municipality, including the provision of clean water and electricity, the examination of cattle before they were slaughtered, building roads, setting up elementary schools and a hospital for the poor, and guaranteeing security. He further volunteered to give summaries of the municipal regulations in force in some Western cities.⁸⁶

To a number of intellectuals the manner of customs collection epitomized the irrationality of the old system. Both Gäbrä-Heywät and Afäwärq lamented the multiplicity of customs posts (*källa*) within the borders of what was supposed to be one country. In *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädadär*, Gäbrä-Heywät illustrates the problem with the case of an ‘intrepid’ merchant, who had told him that he had to give up his trade in camels because he had to pay duty five times between the Teltal plains in eastern Tegray and Mätämma on the Ethio-Sudanese border.⁸⁷ Déréssa too describes the disappearance of the caravan merchant in western and central Ethiopia because of the multiplicity of toll gates.⁸⁸ In a letter to Haylä-Selläsé a few months before his coronation, Afäwärq urges him to make a clean start by centralizing customs administration, for nowhere except in Ethiopia does one see the anomalous practice of provincial rulers appropriating customs revenue.⁸⁹

Gäbrä-Heywät, who emphasized that a rational system of customs administration is the best guarantee for the preservation of the country’s independence, also looked at the question of import duties and urged the

⁸¹ BS, 29.4.26.

⁸² BS, 13.1.27.

⁸³ BS, 9.12.26.

⁸⁴ BS, 23.12.26.

⁸⁵ BS, 29.10.25, 12.11.25, 19.11.25. One of the measures that he recommended was the removal of the abattoir from the vicinity of the palace, something that was carried out only decades later.

⁸⁶ BS, 15.9.27.

⁸⁷ P. 353; see also pp. 77, 102, and Tsägga Zä’ab, BS, 14.1.26.

⁸⁸ BS, 8.7.26.

⁸⁹ MPA, Afäwärq to Haylä-Selläsé, 4.11.22/11.7.30.

government to adopt a judicious policy of selective levying. As an example, he recommended raising the duty on cotton goods from 10 per cent to 50 per cent, whereas machinery for the manufacture of these goods in Ethiopia should be let in duty-free. Rather naively, he believed that this machinery would encourage traditional crafts like spinning and weaving and also render the merchant irrelevant, as the producer was now so near the consumer.⁹⁰

Social justice

The condition of the peasantry

But there is no doubt that the intellectuals' interest in provincial and municipal administration and in fiscal centralization were secondary to their overriding concern for social justice, and particularly for the alleviation of the condition of the peasantry. As so often, it is Gäbrä-Heywät who gives unequivocal expression to this concern, arguing that it is difficult to be patriotic on an empty stomach:

የግብላውንና የግለሰብነትም ያጣ ድኻ የተወለደበትን አገር የግዴታበትን ምክንያት
ያጣልና ያገሩ መንግሥት ቢበረታ ወይም ቢጠፋ ገድ የሰውም፤ ስለዚሁም መንግሥት
የግጥምበት ያገሩ ሀብት በጥቂቶች ሰዎች እጅ ሲሰበሰብ አይደለም። ያገሩን ሀብት
በመላው ሕዝቡ ሲከፋፈለው ነው እንጂ። የሀብታሞች አኗኗርና የሥራተኛው ድኻ አኗኗር
ዐይነቱ እንበል መጠን የሚረዳቸውን አገር መንግሥቱ ከጥፋት አፋፍ እንደደረሰ
ያስረዳል። የኢትዮጵያንም ሕዝብ ሁኔታ ብንመለከት እንደዚሁ ያለ ጥፋት እንዳይደርስ
ያስፈራል።

Someone deprived of the basic necessities of food and clothing has no reason to love his country; he cares little whether his state prospers or perishes. Thus, the state stands to lose if national wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and to gain if it is distributed equitably. Where there is gross disparity between the life standards of the rich and the poor, it means the state has reached the brink of disaster. The situation in Ethiopia gives cause for such concern.⁹¹

Similarly, Afāwārq in his *Guide* castigates the 'lords of the country' for doing nothing but 'eat, drink, and sleep, like sheep being fattened for Easter' – and all by means of the money that they mercilessly rob from the poor. He does not spare the kings, either, for they were the ones who set the example. He comes to the conclusion that the Ethiopian system of government must be the worst in the world; only the Russian probably deserved more condemnation, for it had failed to benefit from its proximity to European civilization.⁹²

⁹⁰ *Mängest*: 78–85.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 119.

⁹² *Guide*: 182. Lest the reader come to the conclusion that Afāwārq had turned anti-monarchist, one should refer to his article (*BS*, 26.9.29) where he describes the monarch

But Afāwārq was to reserve one of his most eloquent pieces for a castigation of the pomp and pageantry of the nobility. His article, *Mādiwā Ébo* (i.e. Medio evo, Middle Ages),⁹³ was supposedly a description of the inequity and extravagance of medieval Europe. But no one could have had any doubts about Afāwārq's real target. In fact, a certain Tāklä-Marqos was so piqued by the uncomfortable parallel with contemporary Ethiopia that he wrote a point-by-point response to Afāwārq's article.⁹⁴ Here is a sample of Afāwārq's unsurpassable – nay, inimitable – prose, describing how the marquises and the barons, the counts and the viscounts [read the *ras* and the *däjjazmach*, the *filawrari* and the *qāññazmach*] lorded it over the unfortunate peasantry:

ጣሪከቸው ሁሉ የኩራትና የመኩራት ብቻ ስለነበረ በትልቅ አጀብ ተከበው፣ በሸልማ ታጥረው፣ በፊት በኋላቸው አምቢልታ እያታለላቸው መሲካና ነጋሪት ቀንዳመለኸት እያነቃቃቸው፣ መሬት በተጠየፈች ሰጋር፣ በፈነደቀ ጭላ ተጀነው፣ ድጋው እንደፈጣሪ እየሰገደላቸው እንደአምላክ እያመለከባቸው እነሱ ሲንቁት፣ ሲለጠቁት፣ ሲለሰጩንቁት፣ ይኖሩ ነበረ። ገባርና ዜጋውን እነሱ በገዛጃቸው እንደንጨት ጠራርበው፣ እንደገንድ ጀራርገው፣ እንደጭቃ ጠፍጥፈው፣ እንደሊጥ ለውሰው፣ አምልመለው፣ ዓይን ጀሮውን፣ አንገት ከንፈሩን ቀርጾው እፍ ብለው ነፍስ የዘሩበትና ያቆሙት ያስመስሉት ነበር እንጂ እውነት እንደነሱ በእግዚአብሔር ፈቃድ የተፈጠረና እንደነሱ ተወልዶ፣ አድጎ አርጅቶ የሚሞት አይመስላቸውም ነበረ።

Their life was characterized by pomp and ostentation. They travelled with a large retinue, to the sound of drums and trumpets, on horses that seemed too haughty to tread on earth, while the poor lay prostrate in front of them, as if they were God. Yet they despised, oppressed and harried them. It was as if the poor were their own creation, and not, like them, God's creatures, as if they shaped them into being out of mud, giving them eyes, ears, neck and lips, and finally breathing life into them.⁹⁵

Afāwārq goes on to draw the economic implications of such a life of ostentation and exploitation. The indolent life of the retainers and the harassment of the productive peasantry could only result in poverty. All this fortunately came to an end with the emergence of the centralizing monarchs, who cut down the large retinues and gave agriculture the encouragement that it deserved. In a somewhat similar vein, though certainly in more subdued

⁹² (cont.) as the representative of God on earth, the only difference between the two being that God does not need an assistant, whereas the monarch does.

⁹³ *BS*, 25.7.29.

⁹⁴ *BS*, 1.8.29. This was most probably *Qāññazmach* Tāklä-Marqos, who later served as Haylä-Sellase's private secretary.

⁹⁵ *BS*, 25.7.29. Sadly, the English version can only be a faint approximation of Afāwārq's prose, particularly in conveying the powerful, if somewhat mixed, metaphors of the last sentence. See also Kidanä-Maryam Abarra's critical report on the tradition of large retinues: *BS*, 22.4.26.

language, Heruy expresses his preference for an aristocracy of merit to replace the aristocracy of birth.⁹⁶ This is perfectly understandable, as Heruy himself had to work his way up to the top from a humble background.

It was not only the indolence of the retainers but also their predatory character that depressed the peasantry. This state of affairs was driven home to *Häkim Wärgenäh* during his first return to Ethiopia, as he accompanied the Anglo-Ethiopian expeditionary force in the Ogadén.⁹⁷ In one of his most powerful paragraphs in ‘*Até Menilek-na Ityopya*’, *Gäbrä-Heywät* too shows how the soldier, so grossly overvalued in Ethiopian culture, has been the ruin of the country:

ባገራችን እስከ ዛሬ ድረስ ሠርተው ደክመው መብላት ነው። ነው። ለጭዋ ልጅም
አይገባም ይባላል። ወታደር ተብሎ አርጌ ጠበንጃንም ተሸክመው አንድን ሹም እንደ
ውሻ እየተከተሉ ከመዋልም በቀር ሌላ ክብረት አናውቅም። ያገራችንም ሰው ሁሉ
ወታደር ነኝ ባይ ነው። እንካላውም ዕውሩም ቆማጣውም በምርኩዝ የሚሄደው
ሽማግሌውም አፍንጫውን ያልጠረገ ልጅም ወታደር ነኝ ይላል። ሌላስ ይቅርና ብዙ
ሴቶችም ወታደሮች ናቸው። የሚበዛው ያገራችን ሰው በወታደር ስም ይጠራል፤
ባደባባይም ሰራ ፈትቶ ሲከበስበስ ይውላል፤ መከረኛው ባላገር በደክመበትም እህል
ይመገባል። አእምሮ ባላቸው ነገሥታት ሁሉ ሥራት ወታደር ማለት በባላገሩና በገዢ ላይ
ከፋት እንዳይመጣ የሚጠብቅ ማለት ነው። ባገራችን ግን የባላገር ደመኛ ብለን ብን
ተረጉመው ልክ ነው። በዚህ ምክንያት ማለፍያዬቴ መሬታችን የሚያርሳት አጥታ ጠፍ
ሁናለች፤ ስለዚህም ደሄየን።

In our country, it is shameful to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow. That is deemed unbecoming of a *chäwa* [a person of respectable parentage]. The highest prestige is attached to being called a soldier, carrying an old gun, and following a chief like a dog. Everyone here claims to be a soldier – the blind, the lame, the leper, the old man walking on a stick, the little boy who has yet to learn to have a clean nose, even women. They call themselves soldiers, but they spend their time loitering in the streets, living like parasites on the produce of the peasantry. In civilized societies, a soldier is someone who protects the peasant and the *gäbbar*. In our country, however, we are nearer to the truth if we define the soldier as the sworn enemy of the peasant. Hence, our fertile land lies fallow. And hence our poverty.⁹⁸

In *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädadär*, *Gäbrä-Heywät* goes even deeper into an analysis of the genesis of the warlord or *shefta* and establishes the link between warfare and political power. He argues that warfare has been a greater menace to public life than droughts or earthquakes and has been the most important factor in arresting the country's development.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Heruy Wäldä-Sellásé, *Bä'edmé Mäsänbät Hulun LäMayät* (1926EC): 91; cf. Kidanä-Maryam Abarra's critical report on the tradition of large retinues: *BS*, 22.4.26.

⁹⁷ Wärgenäh Diary: 222.

⁹⁸ Pp. 348–9. See also Fesseha Wäldä-Mikaél's article in *BS*, 5.2.25.

⁹⁹ Pp. 31–40. Afäwäraq has a similar passage on the progression of the *shefta* from a

Afāwārḳ's dialogue with his foreign companion has some interesting passages on the rapacity of the soldiery, whom at one point he calls pagans. The barrenness and undeveloped character of the land that they are passing through, the Ethiopian guide tells his foreign interlocutor, are 'attributable to the king's army, whose sole occupation is to pillage and terrorize the poor'.¹⁰⁰ Further on, there is this interesting exchange between the two travellers:

– ገነት የመሰለው ሁሉ አገር እንዲህ ጭራቹን ጠፍ ነው፤ ምነው ነፍስ ውል አይልበት?

ያገሩ ለምነት ሄታል?

– ባንድ ወገን ጦርነቱ ባንድ ወገን አራቡ ሕዝቡን እየፈጀው አገሩን በሄት ይልማ ሰጧስ

እንዴት ይራባ ጌታው?

– ሄትኛው ጦርነት ነው ሕዝቡን የሚላሳነሰው

– ባለባቸው ምን ጦርነት ነው ብለው ይጠይቁኛል እርስዎ ወይ ጌታው! ባለባቸው አንዱ ላንዱ ሰጥ

ብሎ መገዛት አያውቅም። ንጉሥ በተሰጠው ቁጥር አንዱ አስቸገሮ አስተነግሥ ድረስ

እርስ በርስ መሳመጥና መዋጋት ብቻ ነው።

Foreigner: How come such a beautiful country lies undeveloped? Why is not a soul to be seen?

Ethiopian: How can the country develop or the people reproduce when they are subjected to the twin plagues of famine and war?

Foreigner: Which wars are you talking about?

Ethiopian: Has Abyssinia known anything but wars? In Abyssinia, it is uncommon for one to submit peacefully to another. Royal succession is invariably preceded by a bloody civil war.¹⁰¹

In another article, Afāwārḳ ponders the paradox of famine in a country of such rich potential as Ethiopia – a paradox which as we know still remains unresolved:

ኢትዮጵያ፡ ኢትዮጵያን ደግ ነበረች። ነበረች ብቻም አይደለ ማለፊክ በሆነች። ላገር

ልማት ለመንግሥት ክብረት መሠረቱ እርሻና አህል ነው። የቀረው ግን ተከታይ ነው። ...

ይህ ሁሉ መሆኑ እርሻና ቁፋሮ በማንነቱ ነው። እርሻና ቁፋሮ አለመብዛቱም ባላገሩን

ገበሬውን አይዘህ የሚል በመታጣቱ ነው።

The basis of development and national wealth is agriculture. All the rest is subsidiary. It is very depressing that famine has struck its roots in rich and fertile Ethiopia. Except for a few arid areas here and there, the country is well-suited to farming and herding ... All this [i.e. the famine] is because our agriculture is in a poor state. That again is because the peasant is not given support and encouragement.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ (cont.) common robber to a powerful warlord: *Guide*: 227.

¹⁰⁰ *Guide*: 214.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 225.

¹⁰² *BS*, 16.5.29.

The ultimate irony, Afäwärq goes on, has been reached with the import of grains from India. Some foreigners, after seeing the idle people loitering in Addis Ababa, claim that Ethiopians are victims of famine because of their indolence. But that is not true. These foreigners have not seen the Ethiopian peasant, who labours day and night managing his farm.¹⁰³ In the *Guide* Afäwärq poses a fundamental question to emphasize how the injustice and rapacity of the system vitiate the industry of the Ethiopian peasant:

በወዙ የበቀለው ፍሬ ለወታደር ቀለብ ተሆነ ተጨንቆ ተጠቦ ያሳደገው ከብቱ ለባለቤቱ
መወፈረክ ተሆነ የርቢ ላምና የርሻ በሬ ስለውጥበታለሁ ብሎ ያኖረው ፈረሰና በጎሱ ተመልሞሎ
ላገረ ገዥ ተሂዶ ተገጠሮ ሲሰርሰና ሲቆፍሮ ውሎ ደዘሞት አርፋለሁ ሲል በቤቱ ኃይለኛ ወታደር
ገብቶ ባለቤት ሁኖ ሲአበይንበት ታገኘው ምን ያዳክመዋል በከንቱ?

Why should the peasant toil if the fruits of his labour go to feed the soldier, if the cattle he had tended with so much care end up fattening the *gult*-holder, if the horse and the mule that he had kept to trade for a cow and a plough ox are groomed for the governor, and if, on retiring after a hard day's work, he finds a domineering soldier lording it in his own house?¹⁰⁴

Most often, therefore, the peasant opts to become a soldier himself, 'for it is better to rob and plunder than to be robbed and plundered' ('**ሲዘረፋና ሲገፈፋ ከመኖር ሌላውን ሲዘርፋና ሲገፋ መኖር ይሻላል**').¹⁰⁵ Afäwärq places the blame for the recurrence of famine in the country on the multiple exactions imposed on the *gäbbar*, the tribute-paying peasant. He therefore urges the state to take measures to encourage farming undaunted by the shameful disgruntlement that the nobility is likely to exhibit at the curtailment of its privileges. 'The tears of the poor', he warns, 'are bound to spear like an arrow.'¹⁰⁶

In July 1927 Asbä Haylu wrote in *Berhanena Sälam* perhaps the most passionate exposé of the lot of the *gäbbar*. Why is it, he asked rhetorically, that Ethiopia alone of all countries has been condemned to live in ignorance and underdevelopment? He castigated the landed nobility, who boast about their property but make hardly any effort to develop it: 'neither do they work it nor are they prepared to give it to those who can'. He described the iniquity of the *gäbbar* system through the life cycle of a typical *gäbbar* in northeastern Shäwa, who is forced to give two-thirds of his labour time to the *shaläqa*, the *meslané* and the *dug* (all representatives of the political master, the *malkäñña*) and to carry the various forms of tribute (grain, honey, firewood) five times a year to the *malkäñña*'s residence in Addis Ababa. He depicted the total disintegration of the *gäbbar*'s household: the *gäbbar* himself dying of hunger and disease while doing errands for the *malkäñña*; the hapless wife forced to abandon her hut and wander from place to place in search of a livelihood for herself and her orphaned child; the cup of misery and deprivation finally full to the brim with the death of the child.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Guide*: 233–4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *BS*, 16.5.29.

The subhuman lot of the *gäbbar* is brought out forcefully both in the widow's dirge and in an exchange between two neighbours who saw the *gäbbar's* body being carried out from the *mälkäñña's* compound. One asks of the other: 'I saw today a corpse being carried out from your neighbourhood; who was it that had died?' The other responds: 'It is nobody; it is only a *gäbbar*.' The author's conclusion underlines both the cardinal importance of agriculture and the industriousness of the Ethiopian peasant:

እንግዲህ ልጅ ጣቱ ፋንታ ተተክቶ ያባቱን ርስትና ምድር ካላረሰና ካልቆረረ ለመንግሥት
ሀብቱና ጥቅሙ ከወዴት አገር ሲመጣለት ነው አራሽ ገበሬውም ባል እንደያዘው ድመት
እያደር መመንመኑ አለወግ አለ አገባብ መገዛት ቢበዛበት ነው እንጂ የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ
እርሻ ቁፋር አያውቅም ሲባል አይቃጣም።

Unless the son succeeds the father on the farm, from where is the nation going to get its wealth? The peasant is getting more and more emaciated like a cat in the grip of a cough because he is subjected to exploitative rule; no one can legitimately claim that Ethiopians make indolent farmers.¹⁰⁷

The system of billeting soldiers in peasant households, which is alluded to in Afāwārq's passage quoted above, is severely criticized by Gäbrä-Egziabhēr Gila-Maryam. Describing it as the worst of all the scourges that have afflicted the country, he describes how the peasant is forced to support ten or more soldiers quartered in his house, the corporal punishment that he suffers if he is found wanting in his hospitality, and the ultimate indignity of being robbed of his wife and daughters.¹⁰⁸ A contributor to *Berhanena Sälam* who gives only his initials contrasts the deceptive comfort of life in Addis Ababa and the misery of the countryside. In a line reminiscent of Afāwārq's, he concludes: 'The tears of the people are going to accumulate and descend on the king.' Ethiopia, he said, is in a state akin to that of a slowly but surely dying leper.¹⁰⁹

Focusing on the condition of the Tegréan peasantry, with which he says he is most familiar, Kidanä-Maryam Abärä describes the many tribute-collectors who descend like hyenas on the peasant during harvest time, and argues for a fixed tax to the state. As if such exactions which have become his standard fare were not enough, the peasant often finds himself caught in a vice between the *shefta* (the robber-cum-rebel), who takes everything he wants, and the government agent, who punishes the peasant for failing to report the presence of the *shefta*. The destruction wrought by the so-called representative of law and order, Kidanä-Maryam observes, is ten times

¹⁰⁷ *BS*, 21.7.27. See also Afāwārq, *Guide*: 239, where the multiple obligations of the *gäbbar* are described in more general terms.

¹⁰⁸ 'Ze Mätshaf': 54. See Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia* (1966): 341–2, for an early nineteenth-century version of the billeting system where a peasant is roasted alive for hiding ghee from the insatiable soldiers.

¹⁰⁹ *BS*, 2.9.26. In *BS*, 9.9.26, the same author criticizes the *afärsata*, a traditional system of recovering stolen property, mostly cattle, and the abuse by the *shaläqa* of their military power.

worse than the damage caused by the *shefla*.¹¹⁰ Two other exactions which afflicted the Ethiopian peasant at this time were highlighted by Afäwärc and Heruy. These were *mäten* and *dergo*. Both entailed the supply of provisions by peasants to visitors passing through their locality, the former to Ethiopian officials, the latter to foreign travellers, who were usually provided with the requisite writ of authority from the king or a local governor.¹¹¹

The way out of this iniquitous and arbitrary system of surplus appropriation, many of the reforming intellectuals believed, was through the introduction of a fixed tax, or *qurt geber*. Gäbrä-Heywät proposed this in 1912.¹¹² Déréssa supported it, commending Täklä-Hawaryat for introducing it while governor of Jijjiga and of Chärchär.¹¹³ He also found the absence of fixed tax to be at the root of the disparity between impoverished Ethiopia and prosperous Egypt, although the latter's prosperity, ironically enough, was based on the silt-laden waters of the former.¹¹⁴ Another contributor to *Berhanena Sälam* went one step further and argued for the standardization of not only tribute on land but also tribute on produce (the *asrat* or tithe).¹¹⁵

As in so many instances, Gäbrä-Heywät and Täklä-Hawaryat went further than the question of agrarian tribute and tried to tackle the fundamental issue of landed property. Gäbrä-Heywät argued strongly against the concentration of land in the hands of the few but defended absolute private property, i.e. the right to sell or transfer one's own land, and apparently saw no contradiction in the two positions:

እንሆ መሬት በጥቂቶች ሰዎች እጅ ሲገባ ላገሩ ከፋ ምልክት ነው። ሕዝቡ እንደ ደኸየና የመንግሥቱ ገደል አያነሱ እንደ ሄደ ይመስከራል። መሬቱ ተከፋፍሎ በብዙ ሰዎች እጅ የሆነ እንደ ሆነ ግን የሕዝቡን ሀብትና የመንግሥቱን ገደል ያመለክታል። ይህ ስለ ተባለ ግን መሬት አይሸጥ አይለወጥ ተብሎ ቢታወጅ ለሕዝቡ የበለጠ ጉዳት ይሆንበታል። ባላገሩ ያለው ገንዘብ መሬቱ ብቻ ነውና፤ ይህንንም ያለውን ገንዘብን እንደ ልቦ ካልሸጠ ካለጠጠ ገንዘቢ ነው የሚለውን ነገር ፈጽሞ ያጣል። በዕዳም ቢያዝ እኛን የሚያወጣበት ነገር አያገኝም።

Thus, it is a bad sign when land is concentrated in the hands of a few. It is evidence of the impoverishment of the people and the weakening of the power of the state. Conversely, the broad distribution of land attests to public prosperity and the growing power of the state. This does not mean, however, that the sale and transfer of landed property should be proscribed. Since his land is his only property, the peasant will not have anything that he can call his own if he is barred

¹¹⁰ BS, 13.5.26.

¹¹¹ Afäwärc, *Guide* : 211–13; Heruy, BS, 4.3.26.

¹¹² 'Até Menilek': 351.

¹¹³ BS, 28.1.32.

¹¹⁴ BS, 3.12.25. Déréssa ended his article with a catalogue of Täfäri's major achievements, with the implicit suggestion that only the introduction of the fixed tax remained to crown the impressive record.

¹¹⁵ BS, 7.5.31.

from selling it. He will have nothing to help extricate him if he falls into debt.¹¹⁶

Täklä-Hawaryat was a successful farmer in his own right and a committed agronomist. He even wrote a book on agronomy with sections on plants, soils, the use of fertilizers, irrigation and seed germination.¹¹⁷ By his own account, he had over 250 tenants on his estate at Hirna, in Harärgé, and had no qualms about selling grain from his large stock to the neighbouring peasants in times of famine.¹¹⁸ But he was philosophical about the whole question of land ownership:

ጠላቱን ስንመለከተው መሬት የማንው? የተገኘውስ እንዴት ነው? መሬት እንከ ለተባዛ
ሰው የግል መጠቀሚያው እንዲሆን አልተፈጠረም የተፈጠረው ለፍጡሮች ሁሉ
(ለሰዎችም ለአውሬዎችም እንቁጫጭ እንኳ ሳይቀሩ) ለመኖሯና ለመጠቀሚያ ነው
የተገኘውም በሕዝብ በተባበረ ጉልበት ነው ሰዎች ባወጡት ደንብ የሶሲሊዲዎን
የኮሙኒደዎን የካፒታሊደዎን አስተያየት እንከተል ያልን እንደሆነ አስቀድመን በሃገራችን
ውስጥ የቆየውን ልማድ እንድናጠፋ ያስፈልጋል ይኸ ግን በኛ አድጜ ውስጥ የሚፈጸም
ጉዳይ አይደለም።

When we look deeply into it, to whom does land ultimately belong? How was it acquired? Land was not created for the sole benefit of any one individual. It was created for the abode and use of all creatures (human and non-human, including the small ant). It was acquired by the united efforts of all people. If we wish to follow socialism, communism, and [or?] capitalism, we have to abolish the old customs of our country. But this can not be achieved in our life time.¹¹⁹

Slavery

Injustice of a nefarious order was manifested in early-twentieth-century Ethiopia through the practice of slavery and the slave trade. In an effort to

¹¹⁶ *Māngest*: 88; See also *ibid.*: 82–3, however, where Gäbrä-Heywät describes vividly how the peasant's household disintegrates as he loses his land through either mortgage or bequeathal to some official for a minor act of generosity: the peasant and his family join the growing ranks of the unemployed in the city while land ends up being concentrated in the hands of the rich, who can lead a comfortable life on the yield from their large estates without bothering to develop them to their full potential.

¹¹⁷ *Tenesh Mäḥfātāñña selä Ersha Temert* (1922 EC). He dedicated it to *Ras Mäkonnen*, his protector and educator. An impressive aspect of the work is the author's ingenious coinage of Amharic technical terms. See also his Unpublished Autobiography I: 6, for the difficulty of writing such a technical work in Amharic. His abiding faith in agriculture is neatly summed up in the following observation: 'A 50% profit in a commercial transaction is deemed very high; but, in farming, a seed can multiply itself 200 and even 300 times.' For the environmentalistic implications of the book, see Dessalegn Rahmato, 'Environmentalism and Conservation in Wollo before the Revolution', *JES* (1998): 60–3.

¹¹⁸ Täklä-Hawaryat, Unpublished Autobiography, II: 96–7.

¹¹⁹ Unpublished Autobiography, II: 293. The lumping together of communism and capitalism is curious. It is also of interest that Täklä-Hawaryat made this philosophical statement after he had gratefully accepted the grant of his land at Hirna from Täfäri. See Wärgenäh Diary: 274, for an interesting description of the ceremony of his own formal investiture over church land granted him by *Ras Mäkonnen* in 1902.

emphasize the harsh conditions of the peasant, Afäwärq asserts that the slave was better off than the *gäbbar*, because, whereas the latter had to feed himself and at the same time work for his overlord, the slave was fed by his master.¹²⁰ Although it might indeed be true that, once they joined the household of a rich lord, slaves enjoyed a degree of economic security that partially offset their social degradation, such a comparison ignores the traumas that attended their capture and transport. And in a perverse way people who had been productive in their original settings were converted into parasites of the master's household. It is this economic wastefulness of slavery and slave trade, as well as its inherent inhumanity, that was underlined by some of the intellectuals.

The issue gained particular prominence in the 1920s as Ethiopia sought admission to the League of Nations and the international press, particularly the British press, countered with damning allegations of the rampancy of slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia. *Ras* Nadäw, who led the Ethiopian delegation sent to Geneva to negotiate Ethiopia's admission into the League, sent back a report to Empress Zäwditu describing how he and his colleagues were confronted with documentary evidence by the opponents of Ethiopia's candidacy, highlighting the large number of slaves that Abba Jifar of Jimma owned and traded in.¹²¹ Although Ethiopia did manage to secure admission into the League, the questions raised then forced both the government and the intellectuals to turn their attention to the issues involved.

Täklä-Hawaryat tells us in his memoirs that he prepared a memo on the injurious effects of household slavery. The problems he highlights, such as the corruption of morals and language and the spread of venereal diseases through the sexual liaisons of masters/mistresses and slaves, suggest, however, concern more for the owners than for the slaves. His recommendations for reform, Täklä-Hawaryat tells us, were rejected by the nobility led by *Ras* Kasa Haylu, who apparently had a particular distaste for him and his ideas. In a letter to Emperor Haylä-Sellase, Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat brought a more convincing economic argument for the abolition of slavery: the waste of human resources and the depletion of government revenue. A household slave means not only one more unproductive person to feed but also one *gäbbar* less to pay tribute to the state. He drew particular attention to the decimation of the population around Jimma Abba Jiffar, in Käfa, Maji, Gimira and Gura Färda.¹²³

In the mid-1920s, *Hakim* Wärgenäh emerged as the leader of the crusade against slavery. It was a very difficult undertaking, occasionally causing him some embarrassing retreats. In July 1926, he wrote an article arguing in detail for the abolition of slavery. Such a step, he wrote, would be honouring the commitment Menilek had made to the European powers and the pledge that Ethiopia had made when it was admitted into the League. Slavery, he

¹²⁰ *Guide*: 240.

¹²¹ MPA, Nadäw to Zäwditu, 2.1.16/13.9.23.

¹²² Unpublished Autobiography, II: 113–15.

¹²³ MPA 360/20, Takkälä to Haylä-Sellase, n.d.

continued, was reprehensible on three grounds: it was a violation of Christian ethics; it was economically wasteful, as the governor who enslaved his subjects was like the greedy person who killed his gold-laying goose to get all the gold at one go; and it caused the country diplomatic embarrassment and might even provoke foreign military intervention. He concluded rhetorically: 'Is not the freedom, prosperity and peace of Ethiopia to be preferred to continued slave-ownership?'¹²⁴

This article apparently provoked such displeasure from *Ras* Täfäri that Wärgenäh was forced to recant it in a rather humiliating fashion in the following issue. In his second article, he apologized for his rashness in publishing the first without verifying his information, for he had now come to understand that the slave trade had actually been terminated by Menilek's decree. He lamented his fate for provoking the anger of the nobility and the public, reminded his readers of his earlier defence of the country against the British press campaign, and asked forgiveness, lest one day's error blot out all the good things he had done for Ethiopia.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, he continued to engage actively in running the Love and Service Association that he had set up to encourage the manumission of slaves and to build a school for the children of manumitted slaves. 'There is nothing more precious than giving liberty to human life,' he continued unrepentantly.¹²⁶ Nor did Täfäri's wrath dissuade him from contributing 2,000 berr for the school.¹²⁷

Two other contributions to the criticism of slavery came from the anonymous writer of *Märmero Tämäramro* and from Heruy. The former pointed both to the social wastefulness of slave ownership and to its diplomatic perils. Pointing out that slave ownership had been merely an index of social status, as no slave owner has prospered through the use of slave labour, he warned: 'While we persist in our refusal to emancipate slaves, we may very well end up losing our own freedom.' This, he continued, will come about:

በኛ ጊዜ ባይሆን በልጆቻችን፣ በልጆቻችን ባይሆን በልጅ ልጆችን ምን ቢሆን በቀለና
ፍዳ አይቀርም። በዳር አገር የሚሾሙት መኳንንቶች መሾማቸው አገር ሊጠብቁ ወሰን
ሊያሰፉ የተባረረ የደነበረ ሊመልሱ በደለኛ ገፈኛ ሊቀጡ ዜጎችና ገባሮችም ከሌባ
ከነጣቂ ከዘራራ ከቀማኛ እንዲጠብቁ እንዲዳኙ አልነበረምን። ምድር አይቆረስ አይሸረፍ
አለበው አይቆፈር አይታረስ። የቀበሮ መጮኽያ የየፎች መንጫጭያ የአራዊት መፈን
ጭያ ሲሆን አገሩና መንግሥቱ ምን ተጠቅመ።

if not in our time, in our children's time; if not then, in our grandchildren's time. Justice and retribution will never fail. ...Were not the governors of the border provinces installed to safeguard and expand the frontiers, to bring back and reassure the fleeing, to punish the criminals and protect subjects from robbers,

¹²⁴ BS, 1.7.26.

¹²⁵ BS, 8.7.26. See also FO 371/12352, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 25.5.27.

¹²⁶ BS, 15.7.26.

¹²⁷ BS, 16.9.26. Zäwditu likewise contributed 2,000 berr and Wärgenäh himself paid 151 berr and pledged another 120 berr over a one-year period.

to administer justice? The land cannot be tilled if there are no people to till it. What value is it to the state if it is left to become the abode of howling foxes, cacophonous birds, and capering animals?¹²⁸

Heruy's condemnation was, characteristically, more low-keyed. He had two main arguments. The first was that the association of slavery with the colour of one's skin was fallacious. In other words, people of dark skin were not preordained to be slaves; for instance in history the children of Sém and Yafêt, i.e. the fairer races, were enslaved by the offspring of Kam, the ancestor of the darker races. The second was somewhat in line with his general objection to the hereditary determination of social status. Just as personal traits do not necessarily pass on from parent to child, so the child of a slave need not be condemned to slavery.¹²⁹

The question of nationalities

The enormity of the institution of slavery and the slave trade was such that few of the educated elite could fail to be moved into strong denunciation of them. When it came to the less brazen forms of oppression and exploitation of the southern peoples, however, many failed to overcome the dominant cultural milieu in which they had grown up. One area of exception was the treatment of minorities who had demonstrated exceptional levels of industry and craftsmanship. Concern for such minorities, one might very well argue, tended to be more utilitarian (i.e. the encouragement of technology) than principled. The Guragé were one of the peoples who inspired such sympathy. An editorial of *Berhanena Sālam*, after complimenting the Guragé for their industry and their mastery of such crafts as masonry, carpentry, weaving and tailoring, criticized the public for holding them in contempt. It suggested the abandonment of the shouting of 'Guragé! Guragé!' to hail porters and its substitution by 'Coolie! Coolie!'¹³⁰ This denigratory appellation was again criticized by another contributor, who was at pains to show that he was not doing it because he was of Guragé origin. The use of the term to hail porters, he argued, was an insult to the many Guragé who had risen to important positions in the lay and ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹³¹

The whole question of the denigration of crafts in Ethiopia had been dealt with earlier by *Alāqa Tayyā*. In a letter to Emperor Menilek, Tayyā explained that the spiritual and material backwardness of the country, in spite of its early acceptance of both the Old and the New Testaments, was to be sought, respectively, in the lack of education (particularly evangelical education) and the social ostracism and opprobrium to which learned men

¹²⁸ Pp. 27–8.

¹²⁹ Heruy, *Goha Tsebak*: 242ff., 249. One can continue the parallel and say that, likewise, the son of a commoner like Heruy (to whom some even ascribed a slave parentage) need not be barred from rising to the exalted post of foreign minister.

¹³⁰ *BS*, 5.3.25

¹³¹ *BS*, 14.8.30.

and craftsmen were subjected. He therefore urged the emperor to make a decree against the use of abusive epithets to describe craftsmen. He also recommended the introduction of compulsory education, the import of printing machinery and the printing of books, and the replacement of the alien Maria Theresa thaler by currency bearing his image.¹³² Tayyā's letter could be considered as one of the most influential documents produced by the intellectuals, for it apparently had a direct and immediate effect on policy. Menilek did issue his own currency and start a printing press, and above all he proclaimed a decree affirming the dignity of labour and threatening dire penalty for anyone who still persisted in using the abusive epithets that Tayyā had enumerated.¹³³

Understandably, of all the southern nationalities, the Oromo (or Galla as they were then known) preoccupied the intellectuals the most. Some of them appear to have used the term Galla, however, in a loose and generic sense, very much as rulers like Menilek did, to define all the southern peoples. Gäbrä-Heywät, although in most respects the most liberated of the intellectuals, has few sympathetic words for them. Afäwärq does seem to appreciate the harsh lot reserved for them. He has his Ethiopian guide explain to the European traveller: 'When Christians are so cruel towards each other, what do you expect will be the lot of the heathen Galla? He is harried like a dog that has trespassed into a church.'¹³⁴ However, his jubilant description of Ras Gobäna's campaigns of expansion into the Oromo country leaves one in doubt about whether he appreciated the human costs involved.¹³⁵

The most sympathetic and understanding treatment of the Oromo is encountered in the writing of Atsmé, the person who took it upon himself to write their history. Although he does not use the term himself, he actually points out that the Oromo call themselves by that name and that it is the Amhara who call them Galla. As a Catholic who had reserved some of his most severe judgements for the Orthodox clergy, he found the so-called heathen Oromo more ethical and more advanced in their system of justice than their neighbours who are wont to pride themselves on their (Orthodox) Christianity. Their only blemish is their ignorance of the one almighty God. Even that, Atsmé explains, is the fault of the Orthodox clergy, who had failed to do the necessary evangelical work.¹³⁶ He was also unsparing in his criticism of the ruthless manner in which the Shāwan kings had subjugated the Oromo.¹³⁷

But the most comprehensive treatment of the Oromo question, if not

¹³² Reproduced in Haylu: 19. The letter, dated May 1907, was presumably sent from Berlin, where Tayyā was then staying.

¹³³ See Mahtāmā-Sellāsé, *Žekrä Nägär*: 421–2, for Menilek's decree of 26 January 1908 on the dignity of labour. See however Afäwärq, *Guide*: 178, for a critique of indigenous crafts from the point of view of their imprecision and the sobering advice of the European companion for patience.

¹³⁴ *Guide*: 240.

¹³⁵ Afäwärq, *Até Menilek*: 32.

¹³⁶ Atsmé, 'YäGalla Tarik', IES Ms. 173, I: 21–8, 39.

¹³⁷ Atsmé, I: 23; II: 1.

necessarily the fairest, was that of Tedla Hailé, whose MA thesis is dominated by it. Tedla begins his discussion with a rather cursory and unscientific ethnographic survey of the country. He estimates the Amhara and Oromo populations at 6 million each. The rest of the population is grouped into Kushites (estimated at 2 millions and including what were described as the original inhabitants, such as the Agäw, Bogos, Fälasa, Käfa, Wälayta and Somali, but evidently excluding the Oromo) and Shanqella (the pet term used to designate all the marginal and marginalized peoples of Ethiopia), estimated at 1 million people. After reducing the protagonists of the Ethiopian polity to the two peoples, Oromo and Amhara, Tedla prescribes the formula for their harmonious relationship. The Ethiopian emperor has three options with regard to the Oromo: enslavement and expropriation, assimilation and indirect rule. The first option is not worthy of serious consideration. The last option, while pertinent in cases of European colonial rule because of the sheer impossibility of assimilating several millions of colonial subjects and the problem of distance between metropolis and colony, is also ruled out in the Ethiopian case.¹³⁸

Assimilation, therefore, remains the only credible and sensible option. As to who is going to assimilate whom, Tedla has no doubts: 'It is for the Galla to become Amhara [not the other way round]; for the latter possess a written language, a superior religion and superior customs and mores.'¹³⁹ Nor is assimilation a novel proposition, Tedla argues. Emperor Menilek had already shown the way by raising to prominent positions Oromo like *Ras* Gobäna, *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis, *Däjjach* Balcha and *Däjjach* Gäbrä-Egziabhér of Nāqämté.¹⁴⁰ Assimilation is also a practical proposition since the Oromo, because of their lack of 'racial pride' (as evidenced in their readiness to intermarry with other ethnic groups), are easily assimilable. Moreover, the two peoples would make a perfect blend, as the enthusiasm and intrepidity of the Amhara would be fused with the prudence and realism of the Oromo. What lends the policy of assimilation practical urgency, moreover, is the need to avert a repetition on an even more devastating scale of the Muslim onslaught of the sixteenth century, when the Somali, embracing Islam, gave the Christian kingdom a shattering blow.¹⁴¹

Coming to the practical ways by which the policy of assimilation could be implemented, Tedla points to education and the army as the two most important vehicles of assimilation. Education, including religious instruction, is the key to assimilation. Tedla goes back to classical Rome to demonstrate how the army has always been a factor for assimilation, be it through the intermarriage of garrison troops with local women or the recruitment of subject peoples into the imperial army. Likewise, all other facets of government policy – administration, justice, economic organization – should be

¹³⁸ 'Pourquoi et comment': 4, 32–3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*: 39.

¹⁴⁰ Tedla seems to be unaware of the fact that Gäbrä-Egziabhér's position as an autonomous ruler of Nāqämté fits more into the indirect rule option than the assimilationist one.

¹⁴¹ 'Pourquoi et comment': 33–8.

regulated by the policy of assimilation. Provincial boundaries need to be redrawn to facilitate the policy. Oromo numerical predominance in the southern provinces should be tempered by a policy of Amhara settlement. Tegréans, too, should be encouraged to settle in the southern provinces, as they are great assimilators by virtue of their religious fervour and their inherent weakness in learning non-Semitic languages.¹⁴² Tedla concludes his argument with a reaffirmation of the imperative necessity of assimilation:

A la tête de nos réformes, nous devons inscrire la politique d'assimilation; car sans l'union des Amharas et des Gallas, il est impossible d'envisager l'avenir avec certitude et enthousiasme. Deux peuples qui évolueraient parallèlement sans se fusionner, finiront un jour par se séparer et constituer deux nations différentes, et peut-être ennemis.

The policy of assimilation should be at the top of our reforms; for, without the union of the Amhara and Galla, it is impossible to visualize the future with certainty or enthusiasm. Two peoples who are allowed to evolve separately will end up forming two different, and perhaps antagonistic, nations.¹⁴³

One interesting reason that Tedla gives for encouraging Tegréan settlement in Oromo areas is the ungovernable character of the Tegréans in their own province. He then recommends the appointment of Gojjame and Shāwan governors over Tegray.¹⁴⁴

Here, we may turn our attention to the attitude of the intellectuals to Tegréans and Tegray, in as much as they expressed their ideas in this regard. Tedla's recommendations are of course easily criticized for lack of insensitivity to Tegréan autonomy and self-respect. But his failings pale into insignificance in the face of the virulently anti-Tegréan sentiments expressed by Afāwārq Gäbrä-Iyyāsus in his *Dagmawi Até Menilek*.¹⁴⁵ This moved Gäbrä-Heywät, a native of Adwa in Tegray, to a sober criticism of the unjustified vituperation to which Afāwārq had descended in his portrayal of Tegréans – and particularly Emperor Yohannes.¹⁴⁶

Gäbrä-Heywät himself had a few words to say about the position of Tegray in Menilek's Ethiopia. He drew attention in particular to the impoverishment of the province, the migration of its people and the rampancy of banditry. This was largely a result of the political disarray that had ensued in Tegray after the death of Yohannes at Mätämma, a process which Gäbrä-Heywät himself had lived through as a child and which indeed had precipitated his move to Eritrea and, eventually, his trip abroad. Gäbrä-Heywät rejected the tendency of most Tegréans to blame Menilek for all their troubles. 'In one respect, however,' Gäbrä-Heywät concedes, 'Menilek is to blame. He failed to regard the Tegréans as his own people. Bandits who had terrorized the Tegréan peasantry were given honours and appointments once they submitted to him.' Gäbrä-Heywät then makes a

¹⁴² *Ibid.*: 39–47, 61–7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*: 88.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 47.

¹⁴⁵ Pp. 31, 52, 54.

¹⁴⁶ 'Menilek': 338. It is a measure of Gäbrä-Heywät's sobriety and decency that, after expressing his reservations, he strongly recommended Afāwārq's book to the reader.

passionate exposition of the inseparable destiny of Tegray and Ethiopia:

እውነትም በትግሪ ነገድ ልማትና ጉዳት ምን ቸገረኝ የሚል ንጉሥ ለራሱ ይጉዳል። ...

የኢትዮጵያ መሠረቱ ትግሪ ነው። ከቀሩቱም የኢትዮጵያ ነገዶች ይልቅ የኢትዮጵያን

መንግሥት ዕድሜ ሊመኝ የሚገባው ትግሪ ነው።

A king who is indifferent as to whether the Tegréans prosper or perish is bound to pay for it ... Tegré is the foundation of Ethiopia. And of all the peoples of Ethiopia, it is Tegréans who should wish the Ethiopian state a long life.¹⁴⁷

As we have seen,¹⁴⁸ Menilek comes in for particularly severe condemnation from Gäbrä-Egziabhé for his abandonment of Eritrea to the Italians. His reign, which is generally described in the most glowing of terms in the wake of the Adwa victory, is judged by Gäbrä-Egziabhé as the antithesis of the glorious chapters of Ethiopian history. Few of the early intellectuals followed up Gäbrä-Egziabhé's irredentism. Gäbrä-Heywät was content to refer to the Italian colony as a model of development rather than as a province to be restored to Ethiopia.¹⁴⁹ Afäwärq is believed to have made a fortune through the commercial and agricultural business that he embarked upon in Eritrea in 1912.¹⁵⁰

As Ethiopia and Italy glided towards their second confrontation in the 1930s, however, we encounter what amount to recommendations for a pre-emptive attack on the Italians in Eritrea. Thus, Tedla, who was Ethiopian consul at Asmara, urged not only close surveillance of the Ethio-Eritrean boundary but also active support and encouragement of the anti-Italian sentiment prevalent among Eritreans.¹⁵¹ A few months before the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war, an Eritrean teacher in the Sudan, Gäbrä-Ab Berru, wrote to the emperor that the whole Hamasén population had been looking towards Ethiopia for years. They were shedding tears of blood because they had waited in vain for support from Ethiopia. Gäbrä-Ab suggested placing an ardently patriotic and incorruptible person in Adwa to coordinate actions.¹⁵² But the most elaborate recommendation for a pre-emptive attack on the Italians in Eritrea had come much earlier, from a certain *Blatta* Haylä-Maryam. This envisaged a three-pronged attack to liberate Asmara, to be followed later by driving out the Italians from their retreat in Massawa.¹⁵³

Concern for the lot of the Ogadén Somali is expressed by Mälaku

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 341–2.

¹⁴⁸ See p. 66 above.

¹⁴⁹ *Mangest*: 350, 353.

¹⁵⁰ Rouaud: 129–32.

¹⁵¹ Del Boca, I: 232.

¹⁵² MPA, 11.11.27/18.7.35.

¹⁵³ MPA 360/9, memo, 1.1.25/11.9.32. It is not clear who *Blatta* Haylä-Maryam is. Copies of the memo were sent for comment to *Ras* Seyum Mängäsha, the governor of western Tegray, and to – if one can judge by the initials – *Däjjach* Haylä-Selläsé Gugsä, the governor of eastern Tegray. This is all the more surprising in view of Haylä-Selläsé's defection to the Italian side at the outbreak of hostilities.

Bäyyan, who recounts his encounter with a group of refugees from Jijiga while he was a student in the United States. He was moved by the story of a refugee who had lost his parents in one of the periodic raids that were launched against them. Fed up with the life of a refugee, he now wanted to go back to his country but feared that he would be unwelcome. Mälaku responded by painting an alluring picture of the new Ethiopia that was being created by his sponsor, Täfäri Mäkonnen, where oppression of nationalities was coming to an end, and dissuaded the Somali from seeking asylum in a country like the United States where blacks were discriminated against.¹⁵⁴

Religious persecution

Another manifestation of social injustice that was addressed by the intellectuals was the issue of religious persecution. This affected not only Muslims but also non-Orthodox Christians.¹⁵⁵ An exception to those making a general plea for tolerance was Gäbrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam, who describes Islam in the most jaundiced of terms and embarks on a long argument to demonstrate its fallacy. Both Tayyā and Heruy were critical of Emperor Yohannes for his policy of forcible conversion of Muslims. Tayyā goes further and makes the point that, under the more tolerant rule of Menilek, a movement led by an erstwhile Muslim leader, *Shaykh Zākaryas*, succeeded in converting more Muslims to Christianity than was achieved by the ruthless campaigns of Yohannes.¹⁵⁶ Although his portrayal of the Muslim faith was far from flattering, Mälaku Bäyyan none the less wrote a strong defence of the freedom of worship. 'It is infinitely wrong to ban the propagation of any faith,' he wrote. What the Orthodox priests should do is to demonstrate by force of argument the superiority of the Scriptures to the Quran. He expressed particular dismay at the failure of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to adjust itself to the changing times, as a result of which Catholicism and Protestantism had been able to win many adherents, particularly among the modern educated elite.¹⁵⁷

Much more unsparing in his criticism of the Orthodox clergy was the Catholic Atsmä-Giyorgis. In a tone reminiscent of Zänāb's description of the clergy during the *Ṣāmānā Mäsafent*,¹⁵⁸ Atsmé rails against them as the cause of all Ethiopia's ills:

ከገደደ አስከ ገደደ የተለወጠ ነገር የለም ። በኢትዮጵያ በየወንዝ የፈሰሰ ደም የተደረገው
ሥራ ጥፋቷም ምንጩ ደ ነው ። ይህችን የክበረችና የኖረች መንግሥት አበረጅተው

¹⁵⁴ BS, 15.9.27, 22.9.27.

¹⁵⁵ 'Ze Mätshaf': 20, 25–6.

¹⁵⁶ Haylu: 45–7; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 54. The author of *Mämero Tāmāramro* makes the same point about the Shaykh Zākaryas movement. For more about the movement, see Donald Crummey, 'Shaikh Zākaryas: an Ethiopian Prophet', *JES* (1972): 55–66. For Heruy's tolerant attitude towards Catholicism, see his *Masanbat*: 23.

¹⁵⁷ BS, 8.3.28.

¹⁵⁸ See Enno Littmann, ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of King Theodore of Abyssinia* (1902): 5.

**ያደነቆሯት ካህናቷ ናቸው የከፋት ምንጮች የድንቁርና መሠረቶች ... በካህናት ከፋት
የሸረቁትን በኢትዮጵያ ሰንቱን እንጽፋለን። ሀገርም ጥቂት ቀን ከጦርነት አርፋለሁ ስትል
የሃይማኖት ነገር ያነሳሉ መርዝና ቂም ያለበት ሰብከታቸውን ይዘው በየመኳንንቱ ቤት
ይዞራሉ ከቤተ ክርስቲያን ሳይሔዱ በማለዳ ወደ ቤተ ነገሥታት ይሄዳሉ።**

Nothing has changed from 1500 to 1900. The cause of all the blood that has watered the rivers of Ethiopia, all the destruction that has visited the country is one. It is the clergy who have rendered this rich and ancient land ignorant and sterile. They are the source of all evil, the foundation of ignorance. Numerous are the rebels whom the clergy incited to rise in arms. No sooner had the country gained a respite from one war than they trigger religious disputes. They sow their venomous sermons among the nobility. They go to the palace before they go to church early in the morning.¹⁵⁹

Less partisan and, as so often, more logical is Gäbrä-Heywät, who listed freedom of religion as one of the recommendations for reform at the conclusion of his ‘Até Menilek’. He argued that freedom of worship would help the Orthodox Church get out of its smug confidence in its superiority and force it to compete with other denominations and religions on an equal footing, without the support of the state. He cited as an example the case of Hamasén (Eritrea), where the challenge of Protestantism and Catholicism inspired the Orthodox clergy into a mastery of the Scriptures to defend their faith. It is a sign of ignorance, he castigated his countrymen, to try to be a spokesman of God without knowing God’s word. He then concluded with one of his most potent passages:

**ሃይማኖት የልብ ነገር ነው ስለዚህ ሰማያዊው ንጉሥ እንጅ የዚህ ዓለም ንጉሥ
አይቆጣጠረው። ወንጌል የቂማርን ለቂማር ሰጡ የእግዚአብሔርንም ለእግዚአብሔር
ያለውም በዚሁ ቢተረጉም ለመንግሥታችን ሳይበጅ አይቀርም።**

Religion is a matter of conscience. Hence it falls within the purview of the King of Heaven, not the earthly king. It would do our government a lot of good if it heeded the words of the Gospel: ‘Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and unto God what belongs to God.’¹⁶⁰

Such lines seem to anticipate the dictum that later came to be associated with Emperor Haylä-Sellasé : ‘The nation belongs to us all, but religion is private.’ In reality, although Muslims were spared the physical harassments of the earlier century, the fact that the emperor continued to be head of both church and state meant that Gäbrä-Heywät’s proposal for the separation of the two institutions was far from realized.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Atsmé, I: 132.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Até Menilek’: 353–4.

¹⁶¹ Ayyälä Zäwägä: 86 prefers to see the dictum as a pilfering of Gäbrä-Heywät’s ideas, over and above – as he tends to think – the deprivation of his life. While the latter point is highly speculative, the ‘pilfering’ of the idea of religious freedom points to the potency of Gäbrä-Heywät’s ideas and at the same time adds to the emperor’s credit rather than detracting from it.

The anonymous author of *Märmero Tämāramro* adds his voice to the debate along similar lines. He drew a fundamental distinction between love of country and love of faith. While all should be united in defending the state, affairs of religion should be left to the all-knowing and all-powerful God, who knows better than us how to be jealous for his faith. What was particularly galling to the writer, who was probably a Catholic, was the fact that Ethiopian Christians had been ready to fight each other on minor points of doctrinal interpretation more than they were prepared to fight the Muslims and the heathen.¹⁶²

Gender issues

Not surprisingly for the time, gender issues were something in which the intellectuals showed little interest. Tedla proposed the setting up of a society of women under the patronage of Empress Mānān, 'de s'occuper de la femme en tant qu'épouse et mère'.¹⁶³ Heruy dispensed some words of wisdom about the ideal wife and how a husband should conduct himself when confronted with an unfaithful wife.¹⁶⁴ Although Wārḡenāh's wife, Qātsälawārq Tulu, was to be the moving spirit behind a women's welfare organization, we do not know how much the husband gave active support and encouragement to his wife. Gābrā-Heywāt's indirect remarks about women do not enhance his credentials as the most liberal of the intellectuals.

Appropriately enough, the strongest and most reasoned defence for women's rights came from a woman. In 1929 a series of articles by a Bāqqālā Zāllāqā appeared in *Berhanena Sālam*. They criticized women, particularly women of the nobility, for being unproductive and for wrapping themselves up and wearing long skirts. This evoked a response from Amsalā Tebāb Wāldā-Ab of western Wāllāga, who put the blame for the attitude of women on their husbands in particular and society in general. Women would be automatically modernized, she argued, the moment their husbands assumed modern ways. If women stopped wrapping themselves up as tradition required and if they started wearing shorter skirts, their husbands would start accusing them of trying to attract other men's attention. European ladies, Amsalā Tebāb went on, freely hold hands in public with male friends of their husbands; Ethiopian women could not even hold hands with their own husbands. Sending girls to school, which would indeed be an important way of helping women break out of traditional restrictions, was something that lay in the power of the husband, not the wife. Thus the key to the liberation of women, she concluded, was the enlightenment of their husbands.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Pp. 8, 12.

¹⁶³ 'Pourquoi et comment': 82.

¹⁶⁴ Heruy Wāldā-Sellāsē, *Lāleḡ Meker LāAbat Mātasābya* (1923EC): 16, 21–2.

¹⁶⁵ *BS*, 17.1.29, 15.5.30, 29.5.30.

Six



The Expansion of Knowledge

Education

Understandably, education constituted an important element of the reforms recommended by the intellectuals. Once they themselves had seen through direct or indirect exposure the benefits of modern education, they wanted these benefits to be given a strong institutional basis in society. Thus, Gäbrä-Heywät, Täklä-Hawaryat, Wärqenäh, Tedla, Déréssa and the education minister Sahlé Tsädalu all came out with various recommendations for educational reform.

As early as 1906 *Aläqa* Tayyā wrote in a letter to Menilek from Berlin how he ‘was burning with envy’ at seeing the Japanese and Moroccan governments sending their young people to imbibe the science and technology of the West and suggested that the emperor do likewise.¹ Gäbrä-Heywät pointed to education as an important vehicle of Westernization. Rather than spend a fortune paying for the salaries of foreign experts, he argued, the Ethiopian government should open schools and make it possible for Ethiopians to discover what is best for the country themselves.² In his appraisal of the status of education in Menilek’s Ethiopia, he delivers a scathing critique of the Coptic teachers of Menilek II School, calling them ‘teachers who are themselves in need of instruction’.³ He went on to make an elaborate recommendation for setting up a national educational system.

He urged opening Western-style schools in all the provincial capitals for instruction in the Ethiopic alphabet and the Amharic language, but he focused his attention on the four major cities of Addis Ababa, Harär, Gondär and Aksum. There the government should set up main (*awra*) schools with four European and five Ethiopian teachers. The former were

¹ Haylu: 18 (Tayyā to Menilek, 3.13.1898/8.9.06).

² *Mängest*: 125.

³ ‘*Até Menilek*’: 351.

to teach mathematics, history and geography, English and French, with Italian being substituted for English in Aksum (apparently because of its proximity to the Italian colony of Eritrea). The five Ethiopian teachers were to teach the gospels, Amharic grammar, Ethiopian history and the *Fetha Nägäst* (the traditional legal code).⁴ He estimated the annual budget for salaries and other expenses at 150,000 berr. No less interesting are his recommendations for adult literacy and opening handicrafts schools.⁵

In a memo devoted largely to issues of administrative reform, Täklä-Hawaryat also devotes a few lines to suggesting a syllabus for primary-level education: reading (in Amharic, Ge'ez and French), writing (Amharic), arithmetic, religious instruction, Ethiopian history, natural history, agriculture and animal husbandry, and handicrafts.⁶

In 1923, as Ethiopia was striving hard to gain admission to the League of Nations, *Käntiba* Gäbru stressed in a memo he wrote to the palace that education was Ethiopia's best defence against foreign aggression. To drive his point home, he cited the examples of the indigenous populations of Australia and America who were displaced by whites because of their lack of education.⁷ Wärqenäh did not have to go that far to make the same point. Speaking on the occasion of the opening of Täfäri Mäkonnen School in 1925, he asserted that the subjugation of the Oromo, Wälayta and other southern peoples by the north was proof to him of a universal law that the more developed are bound to dominate the less developed and that development can only come through education. Perhaps addressing a prevalent belief that most people with a modern education ended up being merely interpreters, he proposed that students should qualify not only in languages, but also in history, geography and science, as well as being well-grounded in religion and ethics.⁸ *Blatta* Déréssa, too, gave top priority to education (followed by organization) as a vehicle for national development.⁹ More significantly, he proposed the introduction of a progressive education tax, with landlords paying 2 berr per *gasha* and tenants a quarter (*rub*).¹⁰ As we have seen, his faith in and commitment to education were such that he was to expend considerable energy trying to build a school by means of public contributions.¹¹

As was to be expected, Tedla Hailé tied up education with his overriding concern for the pursuit of a successful policy of assimilation. Referring to a speech by Täfäri in which he had expressed his gratitude to all those who were opening schools, Tedla argued that such an attitude ignored the all-important question of the direction ('la direction de la boussole') which

⁴ *Ibid.*: 351. Gäbrä-Heywät apparently forgot what the task of the fifth Ethiopian teacher was to be.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 351–2.

⁶ MPA 361, Memo, 1.2.25/11.10.32.

⁷ MPA, 28.11.15/4.8.23.

⁸ *BS*, 14.5.25.

⁹ *BS*, 3.5.28.

¹⁰ *BS*, 16.5.29.

¹¹ See p. 31 above.

education was taking. While provincial governors like *Ras* Dästa could only have good intentions when they open schools, can one really say the same, Tedla asks, of foreigners? Was it not Leibniz, he reminds us, who said: 'Give me education and I shall change the face of Europe in one century'? Entrusting the education of the Oromo to the English, the Italians or the French could therefore only end up in nurturing Oromo nationalism. 'A foreigner remains a foreigner,' Tedla goes on. 'Ethiopians should be imbued with the love of Ethiopia and nothing else. Missionaries are most often nothing but agents of European imperialism.'¹²

Missionaries should be free to propagate their faith, Tedla conceded. If they wish to open schools, however, the state should determine the syllabus, the textbooks and the medium of instruction (which should be Amharic); time should also be allotted for teaching the state religion, i.e. Orthodox Christianity. His almost obsessive preoccupation with the assimilation of the Oromo even moves him to propose a reaffirmation of the unity of the Ethiopian state and the Orthodox church, involving the state's recognition of the church's properties and the placing of the general direction of public instruction under the *neburä ed* of Aksum; he deemed the creation of a lay ministry of education unnecessary. Other elements in Tedla's educational recipe included the establishment of a teacher-training institute, the introduction of free and compulsory primary education, lasting seven years and with the starting age at six or seven, and the encouragement of adult education.¹³

Likewise driven by the desire to safeguard national unity, the minister of education, Sahlé Tsädalü, comes to even more conservative conclusions. He starts a memo that he prepared in 1933 with a fundamental assertion:

ያገር ጉልበት አንድነት ነው፤ አንድነትንም የሚወልደው ቋንቋ ልማድና ሃይማኖት ነው።
ስለዚህ ኢትዮጵያ ቀዳማዊ መሆኗን ለማስከበርና አንድነቷንም ለማጽናት እስካሁን በቆየው
ልማዳችን ተማሪ ቤቶቻችንን አሰፍተን ቋንቋችንና ሃይማኖታችንን በመላው በኢትዮጵያ
ግዛት በአዋጅ አንዘርጋው ይህ ካልሆነ እስከ መጅውም ድረስ አንድነት አይገኝም። ...
በመላ በኢትዮጵያ ግዛት ለሥጋዊና ለመንፈሳዊ ሥራ ያማሪኛና የግዕዝ ቋንቋ ብቻ በሕግ
ጸንተው እንዲኖሩ ሌላው ማናቸውም የአረማውያን ቋንቋ ሁሉ እንዲደመሰስ ማድረግ
ያስፈልጋል።

The strength of a country lies in its unity, and unity is born of [common] language, customs, and religion. Thus, to safeguard the ancient sovereignty of Ethiopia and to reinforce its unity, our language and our religion should be proclaimed over the whole of Ethiopia. Otherwise, unity will never be attained ... Amharic and Ge'ez should be decreed official languages for secular as well as religious affairs and all pagan languages should be banned.¹⁴

After this opening salvo, Sahlé recommends the proclamation of a law of universal compulsory education, with the imposition of penalties in

¹² 'Pourquoi et comment': 71.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 70–81.

¹⁴ MPA, Memo, 29.11.25/1.8.33.

money or land on those parents who do not honour it. He draws up a syllabus for a ten-year educational programme, which is little more than a standardization of traditional church education. On completion of this fare, the student can be certified with the title of 'lawyer and scholar'. Only then can the state consider the idea of exposing him to the hazards of foreign education. Missionaries should be barred from opening schools and even hospitals and the teaching of foreign languages is to be entrusted to Ethiopians as far as possible.¹⁵ In an earlier memo, though, he had recommended importing instructors in industry, agriculture and commerce, 'preferably from Switzerland or else from Spain', to train young Ethiopians for a period of three years in the theory and practice of their trades. He ruled out the alternative of sending students abroad on the grounds of both cost and the danger of their alienation from society on their return to the country.¹⁶

History & historiography

There are few people as obsessed with history as Ethiopians. It is therefore a matter of little surprise that a number of the intellectuals discussed here tried their hand at history-writing. Some of them even ventured into the novel terrain of historiography. They all aspired to supersede the genre of traditional historiography of the chroniclers, with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, as so often the case, those sounder in methodology did not prove to be the more productive. To the first category belong Gābrä-Heywät and Tamrat Amanuél, to the second Tayyā and Heruy. There were others, too, belonging more to the second category than to the first.

Gābrä-Heywät's 'Até Menilek-na Ityopya' was apparently conceived initially as a history of the reign of that emperor. But, as some passages in the text make clear,¹⁷ the author feels intimidated by the daunting enterprise of passing final judgement on an emperor who was venerated by his countrymen. Instead, after a few critical remarks on his reign, he broadens his essay into a more general critique of Ethiopian society. In his opening paragraph, however, he gives us one of the finest and most concise passages on historical methodology that have been written in the Amharic language:

ታሪክን መግር ለሁሉ ሰው ይበጃል ለቤተ መንግሥት መኩንን ግን የግድ ያስፈልጋል
የዱር ሰዎች ስሕተትንና በጉነትን አይቶ ለመንግሥቱና ላገሩ የሚበጀውን ነገር ያውቅ ዘን
ድ። የታሪክ ጥምሕርት ግን የሚጠቅም የውነተኛ ታሪክ ጥምሕርት ሲሆን ነው።
አውነተኛንም ታሪክ ለመጻፍ ቀላል ነገር አይደለም የሚከተሉትን ሶስት የእግዚአብሔር
ስጥወታዮች ያስፈልጋልና። መጀመርያ ተመልካች ልቦና የተደረገውን ለማስተዋል
ሁለተኛ የማያደላ አእምሮ በተደረገው ለመፍረድ ሶስተኛ የጠራ የጳጳሩ አገዛዝ

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Memo on Education and Foreign Affairs, 21.7.13/30.3.21, courtesy of his grandson, Fäqadä Käbbädä.

¹⁷ E.g. p. 342.

የተመለከቱትንና የፈረዱትን ለማስታወቅ። ያገራችን የታሪክ ጻፎች ግን በነዚህ ነገሮች
ላይ ኃጢአት ይሰራሉ። በትልቁ ነገር ፈንታ ትኒቹን ይመለከታሉ ለእውነት መፍረድንም
ትተው በአድልዎ ልባቸውን ያጠባሉ አጻጻፋቸውም ድብልቅልቅ እየሆነ ሳንባቢው
አይገባም።

Studying history is useful to everyone. But to a government official, it is a must. That way, he could learn of the successes and failures of the past and come to know what is good for his country and his government. But history can be of use only if it is authentic history. And it is not easy to write authentic history, for it requires the following three God-given qualities: first, a keen mind to observe past deeds; second, an impartial spirit to pass judgement on them; and third, an impeccable writing style to communicate one's observations and judgements. But our historians commit a crime on all three counts. They overlook the important and dwell on the inconsequential. They eschew impartiality and embrace bigotry. Their style is so confused that it only confounds the reader.¹⁸

He identifies two types of historians in the past: the official chroniclers and the clerical historians. In their eyes, a king who spends his time with priests and gives them extensive land grants earns more praise than one who builds bridges and schools. Above all, they are wont to give supernatural explanations for all historical phenomena. 'If our historians are to be believed,' he concludes his powerful critique of the chroniclers, 'the kings and rulers of Ethiopia must have few rivals in world history for relying on divine or satanic intervention in the conduct of their activities.'¹⁹

The natural, as opposed to the supernatural, explanation of historical phenomena underpinned Gäbrä-Heywät's philosophy of history. In *Māngest-na YäHezb Astädadär*, he goes even further and defines the parameters of individual and collective responsibility:

ሕዝቦችን ሁሉ የሚፈጥር አንድ አምላክ ነው። ይህም አምላክ የምንለው የሕዝቦች ፈጣሪ
ሕዝቦቹን ሁሉ ትክክል አድርጎ ፈጥሮ ሳኗኗራቸውና ለልማታቸው የሚያስፈልጋቸውን
ነገር ሁሉ ከሙሉ ፈቃድና ሥልጣን ጋራ በጃቸው ሰጥቷቸዋል። ስለዚህ ማናቸውም
ሕዝብ ቢለማም ቢጠፋም በገዛ እጁ ነው። ሕዝብ የሚጠፋበት አንዳንድ ጊዜ ምክንያት
ቢገኝ ያውም ምክንያት ባንዳንድ ሰው ቢመካኝ ነገሩ ትክክል አይሆንም። የልማትን መን
ገድ ለማግኘት የሚጥር ሕዝብ ቢገኝ ባንዳንድ ክፉ ሰው ምክንያት ሊጠፋ አይችልም።
እንዲሁም ደግሞ የልማትን መንገድ ለማግኘት የማይጣጣር ሕዝብ ባንዳንድ ደኅኖ ሰው
ገይሶ ለማት ሊያገኝ አይችልም።

All peoples are created by one God. He created them equal and endowed them with the resources necessary for their livelihood and development and with power and authority over these resources. Thus, each people holds in its own

¹⁸ 'Menilek': 336–7. This introductory paragraph on the nature and method of history appears to have had wide currency at the time. In a culture which is oblivious to the academic crime of plagiarism, it is often reproduced without any pretence at acknowledgement. It is found, for instance, in one of the drafts of *Aläqä Tāyyä*. See below, p. 146.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 337–8.

hands the power to prosper or perish. It is wrong to blame the destruction of a people on certain individuals. A people that strives to develop is no less likely to come to grief because of certain bad individuals than a people that makes no effort to develop is likely to do so through the strivings of certain good individuals.²⁰

Having set this general premise, Gäbrä-Heywät engages in a scientific discussion of the origins of man, which, on the basis of archaeological evidence, he dates back to at least 150,000 years. His repudiation of the biblical version that gives the world less than 8,000 years is cautious rather than strident. It is none the less firm. The great flood, he ventures, probably commemorates one of the many natural cataclysms which early man must have endured, like the volcanic eruption that created the Rift Valley that slashes Ethiopia into two halves. History thus becomes in essence the long struggle of humanity to master nature rather than continue to be its slave or victim.²¹

Gäbrä-Heywät extends this critical and independent spirit to his discussion of Ethiopian history. Assuming that Aksum was as barren in the first century as at the time of writing, he tries to explain the enigma of why the Aksumite ancestors chose such a barren site for their capital by pointing out that the densely forested or swampy areas to the west were too intractable for the ill-equipped Aksumites. With remarkable insight, he identifies Érar as the capital of the medieval kingdom, which he in fact names the Érar state, a novel and interesting designation. His survey of Ethiopian history includes the wars of Ahmad Grañ and the legacy of warfare that continued in the *Žāmānā Mäsafent*, which frustrated the modernizing efforts of Téwodros. Gäbrä-Heywät also admirably captures the nature of the triangular tension (represented by the Mahdists, the Italians and the insubordinate vassals) which attained its climax in 1888 and drove Emperor Yohannes to his doom. His historical survey concludes with the Adwa victory and the restoration of what he, along with Menilek and many others, believed were Ethiopia's ancient frontiers.²²

It is clear from Gäbrä-Heywät's historical writings that he does not attach much value to the story of the Queen of Sheba as the genesis of the Ethiopian state. But what he ignores is rejected in fairly explicit fashion by Tamrat. Given the fact that Tamrat was a Fälasa and that he was associated for a long time with the Zionist philanthropist Faïtlovich, it is a measure of his independent spirit of investigation that he gives little credence to the Jewish connection. He explains the whole story as an outcome of the Ethiopians' effort to erase their pagan past, of which they were ashamed, and replace it with an Old Testament prelude to their acceptance of the New Testament in the fourth century AD. The Ethiopians are not unique, Tamrat explains, in seeking and, if need be, inventing illustrious ancestry. In this respect, he draws attention to the ancient Roman association with the classical Greek legacy through the legend of the *Aeneid*.²³

²⁰ *Māngest* : 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 16–29.

²² *Ibid.*: 35–40.

²³ Tamrat Ammanuél, 'Selä Ityopya Därasyan': 34. See Asfaw Damtē, 'Andand Näṭboch

Tamrat also lamented the fact that the writing of Ethiopian history had been left to the *dābtāra*, as a result of which the true history of Ethiopia remains unknown. As for foreign writers, few know perfectly the languages, the character of the people and the customs of the country and they sway between the two extremes of adulation and vituperation. Although he expressed admiration for the works of the Italian scholar, Carlo Conti Rossini, who had crowned his impressive output with the publication of his *Storia d’Etiopia*, Ethiopia’s salvation lies in being ‘self-sufficient in all fields of education’.²⁴

For reasons different from those that moved Gäbrä-Heywät and Tamrat, Atsmä-Giyorgis, too, rejects traditional historiography. His critique of the Orthodox clergy, which assumes polemical proportions, seems to emanate, however, less from a deep commitment to scientific historiography than from Catholic antipathy. He claims that he had to start the history of the Oromo from scratch because either there was nothing written or what was written was at variance with Oromo traditions. He thereby dismisses rather uncharitably the useful contributions of *Abba* Bahréy and *Azazh* Tinno. The Orthodox priests, who wrote for the kings and the nobility, dwelt on matters of the church rather than on historical events. Although Atsmé chides the clergy for their recourse to supernatural explanations, he himself succumbs to this weakness when he attributes the wars of Ahmad Grañ to divine retribution for the sins of the Christians.²⁵ But his narrative shows some examples of eloquent Amharic prose. Here are a few samples.

On how church historians curiously intermingled sanctity and profanity in their portrayal of Emperor Lebnä-Dengel:

እከፍተው ያጸድቋቸዋል፤ ... ከፋትና ቡራኬ ጋጢአትና ቅድስና በደልና ጸድቅነት ...

ከአምላክ ጋራ ወዳጅነት ከሀገሩ ጋራ ጠላትነት ይህ ሁሉ እንዴት ላንድ ሰው ይሰጠዋል

They profane him, then they sanctify him ... Profanity and sanctity, sin and beatitude, crime and holiness ... Friendship with God and animosity with his nation. How can all this be attributed to one person?²⁶

On the historical context of the Oromo migrations:

እንዲሁ ኢትዮጵያ አርሰ በርሷ ስትፋጅ ጋላ በባዶ ሀገር ሰተት ብሎ ገባ፤ ቀድሞ ሰው እን

ዳልነበረባት።

While Ethiopia was rent with civil war, the Oromo entered unobstructed, as if into No-Man’s-Land.²⁷

On the elemental nature of the Oromo migrations:

²³ (cont.) selä Amareñña Tebäbä Qalat’, *Tobyä*, in particular 1st year issue of (1984EC): 23–5, for a discussion of the significance of the text in the evolution of literary criticism.

²⁴ *BS*, 7.10.29.

²⁵ ‘YäGalla Tarik’, I: 1–7. See Tamrat’s very apt assessment of Atsmé’s antipathy to the Orthodox clergy: ‘Sela Ityopya Darasyan’ (1997): 38.

²⁶ Atsmé, ‘YäGalla Tarik’, I: 6–7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 37.

አግሮች በጉዣምና በደንብያ ሁነው ትግሮችም በገንባራቸው ጠንክረው ባያግዱት አንደ

ፈሳሽ ወሀ አስከ ምሥር ይፈሰበት ነበረ።

Had the Amhara of Gojjam and Dämbya as well as the Tegréans not dammed them with determination, the Oromo would have swept across all the way to Egypt like a mighty river.²⁸

And his description of life in Gondär during the *Žämänä Mäsafent*, so reminiscent of the damning lines of Zänäb, Tewodros's chronicler:

ጊዜው የቀልድ የቧላታ የዘፈነ የጨዋታ የዝሙት የሰካሮ ጊዜ ነበረ። ... [አግራ፣ ኦሮሞ፣

ክርስቲያን፣ አሰላም] በፈ ነገር ተሰማሙ በዝሙት ይሉኝታ በማጣት ነውርን ባለግፈር

አሊ ይሙት በማለት።

It was a time of frivolousness and idleness, of singing and playing, of fornication and drunkenness ... [Amhara, Galla, Christian, Muslim] all agreed on one thing: fornication, shamelessness, swearing by the name of [*Ras*] Ali.²⁹

As someone who had suffered so much persecution at the hands of the Orthodox establishment for his Protestant leanings, Tayyā had more reason than Atsmé to be castigating and polemical. Yet his style was marked by restraint and moderation. In a way, it is difficult to judge Tayyā's historical method, for he did not produce a fully fledged work of history. His *YäItyoṗya Hezb Tarik* ('History of the Ethiopian People') is more of an ethnographic survey than a historical account. The work that would indeed have been his *magnum opus*, and which Emperor Menilek had commissioned him to write, does not seem to have seen the light of day, unless the work commonly attributed to Heruy, *YäItyoṗya Tarik*, actually is his. The universal expectation at the time had been that it would be the definitive history of Ethiopia. In the light of the controversy that surrounds this work, we can only try to assess Tayyā's credentials as a historian on the basis of his only published work, *YäItyoṗya Hezb Tarik*, and what appear to be drafts of his intended grand history left behind by his adopted son, Māngestu Tayyā.

An examination of these works casts doubt on the justice of characterizing him, as Taddesse Tamrat does,³⁰ as the father of Ethiopian history. It is indeed doubtful if any one of the intellectuals by himself qualifies for this exalted title, if we mean by that title someone who charted the path for scientific historiography. The roots of such historiography are to be sought as much in the critical detachment and rationalism of Gäbrä-Heywät and Tamrat as in the industry of Atsmé, Heruy and Tayyā.

Piecing together some of the papers left behind by Māngestu Tayyā, one can form some idea of what Tayyā's projected history of Ethiopia would have been like. He apparently intended to entitle it *Kebrä Nägäst* ('The Glory

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 45.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 183. The omission of the title *ras* might very well have been deliberate, as the bare name Ali (like Muhammad) has the unmistakable connotation of Muslim among Ethiopian Christians. See also Littmann: 3–5, for Zänäb's similar characterization of the Orthodox clergy.

³⁰ 'Alaqa Tayyā': 9.

of Kings’). Why he would have chosen such a slanted title instead of the more non-committal and traditional one of *Tarikä Nägäst* (‘History of Kings’) is not evident. What appear to have been intended as his opening lines, where he invokes the aid of the Trinity to start and finish the work, are very reminiscent of the chroniclers:

በአብ ስም እንጀምራለን ዓለም በፈጠረ በታላቁ ፡ በወልድ ስም እንጽፋለን ኦዲዎን ባዳነ
በመስቀሉ ፡ በመንፈስ ቅዱስ ስም እንጽፋለን፤ ሰውን በግብድስ በጣህሉ ፡ ክብረ ነገሥት
የግዚአ መጽሐፍን የኢትዮጵያንም ታሪክ ሁሉ ፡ ከኦዲዎ እስከ ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ በየክፍሉ
በየክፍሉ ፡ ልዑል አምላክ ይርዳን ወያሽፈጽመን በኃይሉ ፡ ፈራጆችንም ይጠብቅ ኸከፎች
መኖሩበት ከግድታልሉ ፡ መግለጃ በመቀበል ፊት አይተው እንዲያደሉ ፡ ለጥፋት እን
ዲያጠምዳቸው ዲያብሉስ በተንኩሉ ፡ አጫን ።

We start in the name of the Father, who created the world by His Word. We write in the name of the Son, who saved Adam by His cross. We write in the name of the Holy Spirit, who blesses man by His Grace. The book entitled ‘Kebra Nägäst’ and encompassing the entire history of Ethiopia. From Adam to Menilek II, divided into periods and chapters. May the powerful Lord help us finish it. May he protect judges from the temptations of evil spirits. That their judgements may not be swayed through bribes. That they may not be ensnared in the machinations of the Devil. Amen.³¹

As part of the preface, Tayyā had also apparently intended to have a few pages on the uses of studying history. This looks very much like an elaboration of Gäbrä-Heywät’s concise but more powerful statement on the subject.³² Tayyā enumerates five main uses of history: to remove the veil of ignorance, to appreciate the power of God, to relive the events of the past, to experience the cultural diversity of the peoples of the world, and to understand the virtues and vices, the strengths and weaknesses of humanity. Like Gäbrä-Heywät, Tayyā also underlines the special value of history to government officials and identifies the attributes of the good historian, the

³¹ This discussion of Tayyā’s works is based on the papers deposited by his adopted son, Mängestu Tayyā, at the NL, in the custody of the Ethiopian National Academy of Languages, now transferred to the Languages Centre of AAU. I am grateful to *Atto* Asäfa Gäbrä-Maryam Täsämma for leading me to this valuable collection and for permission to consult it.

³² See p. 142 above. The question of who inspired whom is an intriguing question which, however, is difficult to resolve. The weight of evidence seems to favour Gäbrä-Heywät. His ‘*Até Menilek-na Ityopya*’ was published in 1912, while there is no evidence that Tayyā had prepared any draft before that date. Even if he had, the chances of interaction between the two were slight. The only year when the two persons came together, and hence when Tayyā could have possibly influenced Gäbrä-Heywät, was 1908, when both briefly found themselves together as members of the Ethiopian delegation to Austria and Germany led by *Däjjach* Mäshäsha Wärqé. Gäbrä-Heywät had been detailed as an official member whereas Tayyā joined it in Istanbul on its way back. They might have returned to Ethiopia together. But Tayyā’s commissioning to write the history came after his return to Ethiopia, unless it is to be postulated that he may already have started to muse on these things before he obtained the royal commission. The following year, Gäbrä-Heywät exiled himself in the Sudan, and it was in Massawa, soon after his return, that he wrote ‘*Até Menilek*’.

seven ‘gifts of God’ as opposed to Gäbrä-Heywät’s three. The four attributes Tayyā adds are: fear of God, diligence, patience and caution. It is probably in his identification and discussion of the quality of diligence that Tayyā represents a clear improvement on Gäbrä-Heywät:

Just as the bee applies itself with diligence and keenness to preparing from the nectars of various flowers sweet and nutritious honey, so does the historian write history more beautiful and more sweet than honey by reading and examining carefully and diligently books about his country’s history and the history of other countries, written in different countries and in several languages. One cannot have fire without firewood. Nor can one travel in the dark without light. By the same token, it is impossible to write history without consulting books.

What books Tayyā consulted – or would have consulted – to write the history of Ethiopia is not clear. The few references that he gives in his drafts as well as in his published work, *YäItyopya Hezb Tarik*, are overwhelmingly scriptural and show that he had scarcely outgrown the traditional historiography of the chroniclers.³³ But it is perhaps unfair to judge him on the basis of these sketches. As Tadesse points out, his knowledge of non-religious historical sources might have become more evident had he actually completed his project, particularly as he came to discuss more recent times. Tayyā has left behind, however, a detailed outline of the contents of his projected history. According to one version, it was to be divided into 49 major chapters, each with subdivisions, some as many as 24. It begins with a discussion of the different calendars of the world and ends with the reign of Menilek, which curiously enough is Chapter 39 rather than Chapter 49.³⁴ Other chapter headings include: the different names Ethiopia had throughout history, a review of previous histories of Ethiopia, and various aspects of the evolution of the Ethiopian state. From Chapter 19 onwards, the chapters are generally divided according to the reigns of successive Ethiopian emperors, from Menilek I to Menilek II.

Tayyā’s published work and major claim for distinction, *YäItyopya Hezb Tarik*, can be described as the first Ethiopian attempt at ethnohistory. It was first published in 1922, but has been reprinted seven times since then.³⁵ It has a rather shaky methodological foundation, however, being based on an uneasy amalgam of the Bible, oral traditions, a few classical and modern authors and, occasionally, some facile etymological conclusions (e.g. Wäyto=Wehito, ‘the indiscriminate devourers of every moving animal’³⁶). Tamrat, in his incisive review of the works of early Ethiopian authors, criticizes Tayyā for having used the Scriptures as an article of faith rather

³³ Tadesse Tamrat makes this point in his preface to Tayyā: 26.

³⁴ I am referring here to the manuscript, entitled ‘YäItyopya Hezb Mäsärätä Tarik’ (‘Basic History of the People of Ethiopia’), in the Mängestu Tayyā collection. Tadesse (preface to Tayyā: 21–2) refers to a 425-page manuscript then in the custody of the late Qés Badema, which has 35 chapters, the last one being on the reigns of Iyyasu and Zäwditu. See also Tayyā, *Alaqa, Ya-Ityopya Hezb Tarik. History of the People of Ethiopia*, trans. Grover Hudson and Tekeste Negash (1987): x.

³⁵ Hudson and Tekeste: i.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 14.

than as a source of history, for his not being conversant with the latest evaluations of the classical sources, which he uses uncritically, and for his tendency to rely too much on diplomatic reports and newspaper articles.³⁷ It is also possible, as Hudson and Tekeste claim,³⁸ that Tayyā may have drawn from his unpublished 'Kebrä Nāgäst'.

Yet the value of Tayyā's book in pointing out fruitful lines of more scholarly investigation into the peopling of Ethiopia is not to be discounted, as one can see from the good use that Taddesse Tamrat made of it in his reconstruction of the Gafat past.³⁹ That Tayyā himself does not always accept traditions uncritically is evident from his discussion of the Qemant and the Gafat.⁴⁰ His longish section on the origins of the Amhara seems to owe much to Atsmé, while his assertion that the Amharic language had fully developed by the time of Yekunno Amlak, i.e. in the thirteenth century, seems far-fetched.⁴¹ Rather ill-defined and confusing is his use of the term *nāgād* (tribe or race) to categorize the Ethiopian people. Tayyā uses it with no concern about significant shifts in the contents of the categories. Thus we have 'Nāgādā Galla' (nationality), 'Nāgādā Islam' (religion) and 'Nāgādā Wārāséh' (a political elite). Contrary to Tamrat's explicit and Gābrä-Heywāt's implicit rejection of the story of Queen Sheba, that legend occupies an important place in Tayyā's conception of Ethiopian history, so much so that, in his effort to reject the alternative version of a South Arabian origin for the famous queen found (among other places), in the Quran, he launches an unrestrained diatribe against Islam and the Muslim holy book.⁴²

Gābrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam is also at pains to demonstrate the Ethiopian character of Queen Sheba. His 'Ze Mātshaf' is essentially a historical survey of Ethiopia based, like Tayyā, predominantly on the Scriptures but also occasionally on European sources as well as possibly, for contemporary developments, his own observations. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly in view of his association with the Italians, he uses the Gregorian rather than the Ethiopian calendar. Particularly perceptive and well articulated – despite Amharic not being his native tongue – are his descriptions of the essential quality of the *Žāmānā Māsafent* (the reluctance of the Yājju princes to seize the throne in spite of their superior power),⁴³ the revolutionary departure of Téwodros from that policy ('I deserve to be crowned, therefore I am being crowned'),⁴⁴ the handover of Massawa by the British to the Italians in 1885 ('because England told Italy: "Take my place"')⁴⁵ and the inconclusive confrontation

³⁷ 'Selä Ityopya Dārasyan': 38.

³⁸ Hudson and Tekeste: vi.

³⁹ Taddesse Tamrat, 'Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The Case of the Gafat', *JES* (1988): 121–54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 10, 58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 26–34.

⁴² *Ibid.*: 40–2, 44.

⁴³ 'Ze Mātshaf': 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 64–5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 55.

at Sa'ati in March 1888 between Emperor Yohannes and the Italians:

ጣልያኖች በምሽግ ሁነው ዝም አሉ። ሌሊትንም አንደ ቀን የሚያደርጉ ብርሃን
በማድረጋቸው ይሉትንም ፓሎኔ የሚገልጽ ወደ አየር በመውጣታቸው ... ብዙ ሰው
ደነገጡ። ጃንሆይ ግን ብዙ ቀን ጠበቅቶቸው፤ እንግዲህ የሰው አገር እንገዛል ብለው
መጥተውስ ከምሽግ መሃል ከተሸሸጉ እኔ ምን አደርጋለሁ ብለው ሳይዋጉ ተመለሱ።

The Italians lay low in their fort. They terrorized many people by shooting balloons that could light the night as if it were daylight. The emperor waited many days for them [to come out and fight]. Then he returned without fighting, saying: 'What can I do? They came to conquer somebody else's country, but they have chosen to hide in a fort.'⁴⁶

In history, as in many other respects, Heruy was the most prolific of the intellectuals. Not counting his travelogues, in which one often encounters historical digressions, Heruy has four historical works to his credit: *Ityopyana Mātämma*, *YäHeywät Tarik*, *Wazéma* and the incomplete 'YäItyopya Tarik'. The first of these is a reconstruction of the reign of Yohannes culminating in his tragic end at the Battle of Mātämma. As the author tells us at the outset, it is based on foreign (i.e. English) accounts and oral traditions collected from Gondär and Tegräy. It is a sober and dispassionate account of the reign of Yohannes and represents a useful antidote to the diatribe that Afäwäraq had reserved for the emperor in his *Dagmawi Atē Menilek*.

Heruy's *YäHeywät Tarik* (*Biographie*), a useful companion to the student of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ethiopia, was apparently conceived as a kind of dictionary of national biography. And, under the circumstances, it does the job admirably well. Understandably, in view of the author's clerical background, religious figures get more than their fair share of attention, while the entries on his sons, Fäqadä-Selläsé and Wäldä-Selläsé (Sirak), are not only disproportionately long (if they were necessary at all in the first place) but also laced with intimate details. A most disappointing aspect of the work, however, is its general disregard for chronology.⁴⁷

As its subtitle indicates, *Wazéma* ('Eve') was intended to be a prelude to the major work on Ethiopian history that was to follow. It was published to celebrate the coronation of Täfäri as *negus* in 1928. According to the author, it was culled from both foreign and local sources: he cites Bruce and Perruchon for the former and Tayyā for the latter. The story begins with the customary lists of kings as well as those of bishops and *echägé*. The author is emphatic about the importance of these lists, comparing, in a rather ill-chosen metaphor, those who do not know the names and deeds of their kings to children whose conception of food does not go beyond breast-feeding. Then he proceeds in very traditional fashion to incorporate

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 54.

⁴⁷ For a detailed and comparative study, the reader is referred to Bahru Zewde, 'Heruy's *Yä-Heywat Tarik* and Mahtama-Sellase's *Che Balaw*: Two Perceptions of a Biographical Dictionary,' *History in Africa* (1996): 387–99.

biblical accounts of Ethiopia, the history of Meroe and the story of Queen Sheba as one continuous saga.

The chronological lacunae that we have seen in *YäHeywat Tarik* turn into a disturbing series of chronological errors in *Wazéma*.⁴⁸ His essentially Shäwa-centric approach to modern Ethiopian history comes out when he characterizes Téwodros, Täklä-Giyorgis and Yohannes – as distinct from Menilek – as ‘emperors who ascended the throne by force of arms’. Consciously or subconsciously, too, he refers to Téwodros in the third person singular although he reverts to the polite third person plural when referring to Täklä-Giyorgis and Yohannes. He compliments Täklä-Giyorgis for his generosity towards the poor and Yohannes for respecting the autonomy of regional rulers and for bringing four bishops from Egypt, but his judgement of Téwodros is harsher. Although he points to his sense of justice earlier in his reign, Heruy concludes by saying: ‘Ethiopia stretches her hands unto God and prays that a king like Emperor Téwodros may not rule her again.’⁴⁹

What is said to be Heruy’s *magnum opus*, *YäItiyopya Tarik*, did not actually see the light of day in its completed form. Its publication was interrupted by the Italian invasion in 1935–6. Fortunately for posterity, however, galley proofs of 126 pages of the manuscript were miraculously recovered after liberation. A major portion of this was subsequently worked up as a doctoral dissertation by Asfa-Wossen Asserate and published in 1980. The work has generated some controversy because of allegations that what Heruy tried to publish in his name was actually the major work that had engaged Tayyā throughout much of his lifetime. As we have noted,⁵⁰ Māngestu Tayyā makes a similar allegation about Heruy’s *Wazéma*, adducing a number of stylistic arguments as well as the vital piece of circumstantial evidence that, when Tayyā died in 1924, all his papers were taken to the palace in Addis Ababa and kept there, where presumably Heruy would have had unrestricted access to them.

Three points lend credence to these allegations. The first is the habit that Heruy is said to have had of publishing under his name works that he had instructed his subordinates to write.⁵¹ This may explain how he could be so prolific in spite of his heavy administrative duties. The second is the fact that both manuscripts came to pass through the hands of the same person, Qés Badema. We have noted his role as custodian of Tayyā’s unpublished manuscript. It was also he who salvaged and compiled the galley proofs of the manuscript attributed to Heruy; the last 14 pages, which were apparently illegible, were actually copied in his hand. The chance for cross-appropriation is therefore rather high. The third and probably strongest support for Māngestu’s allegations comes from Tamrat, who, in his essay on Ethiopian authors, writes:

⁴⁸ See, for example, pp. 25 (for the introduction of Christianity to Aksum), 33 (Zagwé dynasty), 41–2 (the reigns of Yekunno-Amlak, Amdä-Tseyon and Lebnä-Dengel).

⁴⁹ *Wazéma*: 51.

⁵⁰ See p. 69, n. 156 above.

⁵¹ Oral informant Amanuel Gäbrä-Sellásé.

አለቃ ታዩ ከጥንት እስከ 1910=1918/ ያለውን የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ጽፈዋል። መጽሐፉ
ባለመታተሙ ከጥቂቶች ሊቃውንት በቀር የመረመረው የለም። መዝገበ ቃላትና ይህ
ታሪክ ጠላት አገራችንን ከወረረው ወዲህ /1928-1933=1936-1941 የደረሱበት
አልታወቀም።

Aläqa Tayyā has written the history of Ethiopia from ancient times to 1910 [i.e. 1918GC]. As the work has not been published, only a few *tiqawent* [savants] have had the opportunity to examine it. Nobody knows what has happened to it and the ‘Mäzgäbä Qalat’ [another work by Tayyā] after the Italian invasion of our country (1928–1933EC=1936–1941GC).⁵²

It is highly tempting to imagine Heruy as one of those savants. Such a conclusion would of course cloud not only Heruy’s authorship of the major history work but also that of his other historical works, like *Wazäma* and *Ityopya-na Mätämma*. It is of course not inconceivable that Heruy might have used the raw data that had been accumulated by Tayyā over the years to write his historical works. The essentially Shāwa-centric nature of the unpublished history points to considerable inputs by the Shāwan-born Heruy rather than by the Gondäré Tayyā. Nevertheless, final judgement on the matter will have to await a rigorous and comparative examination of the styles and contents of the works of the two writers.

Whoever the real author may be, the work is of considerable value, particularly for the recent periods, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. It begins, in classical fashion, with the Queen of Sheba and ends with a lengthy account of the campaign of Adwa. Occasionally, though, it departs from folklore, if to the accompaniment of profuse apologies to the reader, as when the author dismisses the legend that Yekunno Amlak was able to seize the throne because he had eaten the head of a cock which, in a foolish act of self-immolation, had been going around saying that whoever ate its head would become king. But he dismisses Ahmad Grañ, whom he describes as ‘the Turk-appointed governor of Zeila’, in a few lines to plunge into his favourite terrain of the history of the Shāwan kings. The Shāwa-centric character of the work becomes evident when the author places one of the sons of Lebnä-Dengel, *Abéto* Ya’eqob, as the founder not only of the Shāwan dynasty, as had been the general understanding, but also of the Gojjamé and Gondäré branches of the imperial line.⁵³

It is when dealing with the events of the nineteenth century that the work attains both richness of detail and soundness of historical method. Indeed, particularly in his discussion and assessment of the reign of Emperor Yohannes, the author attains a degree of impartiality scarcely foreshadowed by his earlier engrossment in Shāwan history. Although he leaves to God the knowledge of possible collusion between Menilek and the Egyptians in the years leading to the battles of Gundät and Gura in 1875 and 1876,⁵⁴

⁵² Tamrat, ‘Selä Ityopya Därasyan’: 38.

⁵³ Heruy, *YäItyopya Tarik*: 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 67.

he is unequivocal in drawing the tragic consequences (for both Yohannes and Ethiopia) of the coordinated defection of Menilek and Tāklā-Haymanot in the summer of 1888. His documentation attains rare heights of excellence in his discussion of the last fateful months of the reign of Yohannes, when he reproduces the vital correspondence between the emperor and *Negus* Menilek. As interesting as the documents are the author's commentary on them, which shows a perfect understanding of the subterfuges and innuendoes that permeate the correspondence. Other examples of methodological sophistication are encountered in the author's explanation of Yohannes's inconclusive Sa'ati campaign and his discussion of the vexed question of why Yohannes made the fateful decision to march on Mātämma in early 1889 rather than deal with his insubordinate vassal in Shäwa or the Italian threat from the coast.⁵⁵

In concluding this section on the intellectuals' historical writings, we may turn our attention to their assessments of three of the major historical figures of modern Ethiopia: Téwodros, Yohannes and Menilek. All three provoked divergent judgements among successive generations of Ethiopians; the intellectuals, too, were far from agreed on any one of them. We have noted Heruy's ambivalent attitude towards Téwodros. Tedla Hailé, too, while regarding the coronation of Téwodros as a turning point in Ethiopian history, basically regarded him as a usurper and explained his tragic end as the natural penalty for hubris.⁵⁶ Tayyā was more conscientious in accounting for Téwodros's downfall, attributing it to his stubbornness, his indiscriminate violence and his consequent isolation.⁵⁷ Gäbru characterizes him as essentially a person who was too much ahead of his time and blames the moral depravity that he showed towards the end of his reign on the *däbtära*, who initiated him into sinful pastimes as an act of revenge for his expropriation of church lands. Gäbru also pays special tribute to the emperor for the wisdom he showed in sparing the lives of his hostages in his final hours of distress, contrary to the advice of his *mäkwant*.⁵⁸

But it was from Gäbrä-Heywät that Téwodros got his most eloquent defence, anticipating the adulation the emperor has come to enjoy among subsequent generations. He cites a quotation – 'A candle cannot give light without burning' – to contrast the tranquillity and comfort of Menilek's reign with the turbulence of Téwodros's. In other words, Téwodros had a troubled career because he tried to change the order of things. Gäbrä-Heywät continues:

ያ ጳጳሩ ንጉሥ ተበግጥሰው የነበሩትን ያበኻን መንግሥት ክፍሎች በሰላው ጉራዴው
ቀጥቶም አዋደደ። ሕዝቡንም ከካህናትና ከሹምች ቀምበር አርነት ሊያወጣ አገር በጄ
ብሎ አወጀ፤ ትምሕርትንም ሊከፍት ተከራክረ። አንባቢ ሆይ በዚህ ጥረቱ ምን ተጠቀመ
ይመስለሃል፤ በመላው ሕዝብ በካህናትና በሹምች ተመክሮ ተነሣበት፥ አሳባደውም።

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 60, 78, 85, 86, 89.

⁵⁶ Tedla Hailé, 'Pourquoi et comment': 1.

⁵⁷ Tayyā Papers, Ms. of 1919/20.

⁵⁸ MPA, Gäbru to Wäldä-Mäsqäl, 10.9.22/18.5.30.

በመጨረሻም ለባዕድ አባልፎ ሰጠው በገዛ እጁም ሞተ። አኦምር የሌለው ሕዝብና ልጅ
ጠቃሚውን አይወድም። የቴዎድሮስ አባብ ግን አልተፈጸመም እንጅ አልሞተም። አባ
ታጠቅ ለራሱ ቢከፋው የማይረሳውን ስም ተክሎ ሞተ።

That king from Qwara united the fragmented Abyssinian state by the power of his sharp sword. To liberate the people from the yoke of clergy and nobility, he declared that land belongs to the state [*‘agär bājé’*]. He strove to expand education. But what do you think was his reward? Clergy and nobility instigated the whole nation against him and drove him mad. In the end, they exposed him to foreign invasion, and he committed suicide. An ignorant people is like a child; it does not know what is good for it. The ideas of Téwodros may not have been realized; but they have not died. Abba Taṭäq [the horse-name by which Téwodros was commonly referred to] may have died, but his name remains immortal.⁵⁹

Yohannes does not attract as much historiographical attention as Téwodros and Menilek. As we have seen, whoever wrote the unpublished history of Ethiopia, Heruy or Tayyā, offers us a sympathetic and fairly perceptive appreciation of the reign of that emperor. The most disastrous aspect of his reign, the policy of forcible conversion of Ethiopian Muslims, is attributed to the sinister influence of fanatical priests.⁶⁰ In spite of his Tegréan background, Gäbrä-Heywät has few words for the emperor, unless it be to defend him against the excesses of Afäwärq. Gäbrä-Heywät quashes Afäwärq’s vituperative tirade in his biography of Menilek with one eloquent sentence: ‘In order to praise Menilek, it is not necessary to condemn Yohannes.’⁶¹

Menilek provoked more sharply defined opposite reactions. He does have his admirers. These range from the sober assessment of Heruy,⁶² through the more enthusiastic characterization by Atsmé as the greatest emperor of Ethiopia since the reign of Yekunno Amlak,⁶³ to the unrestrained and almost fulsome adulation of Afäwärq, who can scarcely wait to launch his eulogy of Menilek. He opens his biography of Menilek with theatrical exclamations on the aptness of the emperor’s name, deferring the preliminaries one normally associates with the beginning of a book to the end of the first chapter. He exploits to the full his preferred rendering of Menilek (i.e. Menyelek=‘what might God send?’):

ላክ ግለት እነገሠ ግለት አይደለም። መንገሥግ እንቴዎድሮስ እነጥሩን ለነተክለ
ጊዮርጊስ ለሰንቱ ሌላው ሁሉስ ነገሥ አልነበረምን፤ ምኒልክ ግን እንደሌሎች አልነገሠም።

⁵⁹ ‘Menilek’: 343.

⁶⁰ Gäbrä-Krestos Täklä-Haymanot offers the same explanation in his *Acher YäAlām Tarik Bamareñña* (1917EC): 99. This is perhaps to be expected as he had relied on Heruy’s *YäHeywät Tarik* for his discussion of Ethiopian history.

⁶¹ ‘Menilek’: 338. Gäbrä-Heywät erroneously styles Yohannes as Yohannes II, although he was actually Yohannes IV.

⁶² *YäHeywät Tarik*: 15–17.

⁶³ Atsmé, II: 190. See also Tayyā’s poem in praise of Menilek in *Aläqa Tayyā Papers*, Ms. 1912 (1919/20).

ዳግማዊ ምኒልክን ለገዢነቱ መርጦ ሂድ ኢትዮጵያ ተጉድታለች የኢትዮጵያ ሰው
አልቅሏል በሀዘቡ ድንቁርና በዝቅበታልና ሂድ ኢትዮጵያን አይዛኸ በላት የደሀውን አገገ
አድርቅለት ድንቁርና ጨለማ አውቀት ግን ብርሃን ነውና በኢትዮጵያ ጨለማው እን
ዲኸር ብርሃን እንዲወጣ ለሀዘቡ የረቀቀው በልብ የጉላው በዓይን እንዲከሰትለት
አስተምረው አርመው ጠብቀው ላንተ አይደለም ለኢትዮጵያ ነው ያንገሥሁህ ብሎ
ላከው።

To say God sent him is not the same as saying God had him crowned. As for being crowned, even men like Tēwodros, Yohannes, Tāklä-Giyorgis and other rīffraff have been crowned. Menilek was not crowned like them. God sent him to Ethiopia saying: ‘Go! Ethiopia has suffered. Ethiopians are in tears. Ignorance holds sway. Cheer up Ethiopia. Dry the tears of the poor. Since ignorance is like darkness and knowledge like light, teach the people, so that darkness may be dispelled and light dawn, so that the people may perceive the abstract with their minds and the concrete with their eyes. Train them, guard them. I crown you not for yourself, but for Ethiopia.’⁶⁴

As Gäbrä-Heywät has aptly observed, Afāwārq appears to have been under some kind of compulsion to flatter Menilek only at the expense of his predecessors.⁶⁵ Even when he adopts an unusually compassionate stance when describing Yohannes’s death at Mätämma, he hurries to reinforce the glory of his hero by giving Menilek the dubious distinction of having been the cause of the emperor’s death.⁶⁶

This is not to say that Afāwārq’s *Dagmawi Atē Menilek* is to be discarded as completely useless. Afāwārq may have been adulatory, but he was not unduly vainglorious. He had no illusions that he was writing the perfect history of Menilek, and he makes that point clear at the end of the first chapter. His predilection for the wanton denigration of Yohannes did not blind him to the power and glory that that emperor came to enjoy after his double victory over the Egyptians in 1875 and 1876 and the significance of that victory for the history of firearms in Ethiopia.⁶⁷ He also has some perceptive, if highly coloured, passages on the swelling of Menilek’s ranks with the many soldiers who came from Tegräy and Gondär in search of fortune, the fury of the Battle of Embabo, and the devastating impact of the great famine of 1888–92.⁶⁸ Nearly half the book is dedicated, understandably, to the history of Menilek’s relations with the Italians. This was a topic for which, as a scholar resident in Italy, Afāwārq would get the most material. Interestingly enough, he credits himself, albeit with a circumspection that is supposed to pass for modesty, for pointing out to Mäkonnen during the latter’s Italian visit in the summer of 1889 the

⁶⁴ *Menilek*: 1–2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 1, 4–5, 53, and his *Guide*: 226, 228–30.

⁶⁶ *Menilek*: 56.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 25–6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 31, 32–6, 60–5.

discrepancy between the Amharic and Italian versions of Article XVII of the Treaty of *Wechalé*.⁶⁹

Needless to say, he has nothing on his more dubious role in 1895, when he interrupted his studies in Switzerland to pass over with Gugsä Dargé and Qetaw Zamanuél to the Italian side.⁷⁰ The final verdict that one could pass on Afäwärq's *Dagmawi Até Menilek* is therefore that, stripped of its hyperbole, it can serve some useful purpose. Occasionally, as when he criticizes Menilek for the amputation of the Eritrean *ascari* who had fought on the side of the Italians at Adwa, he can also manage to show some detachment. His chronology is much better than Heruy's, though he errs where one would have least expected him to do so, i.e. over the date of the battle of Adwa. The ultimate tragedy of Afäwärq was his intoxication with the Amharic language and his incorrigible love for hyperbole. There was no historiographical crime he would shirk from committing if the turn of phrase demanded it.

Täklä-Hawaryat offers us a more critical appraisal of Menilek. After cataloguing the numerous innovations of the emperor, he commented on the slow pace of reform and the handicap of relying on foreign advisers. Above all, he concluded, Menilek failed to give a sound [constitutional?] basis to his government.⁷¹ But Gäbrä-Heywät is even more critical of Menilek. As a matter of fact, his 'Até Menilek-na Ityopya' was initially designed as a thoroughgoing critique of his reign. In its execution, Gäbrä-Heywät appears to have been overwhelmed by the chorus of praise and admiration that the emperor elicited at home and abroad. There is an interesting passage where the author airs his predicament:

እንግዲህ ከጸሐፊው ልብ ውስጥ ፍርሃት ተነሣ የሸዎቹን አሳብ ሊመረምር ነውና።
ዘመናይ ሁሉ ሊያመሰግኑት እንጅ ሊወቅሱት አይወድቅም። —በሐዚህ ብዙ የሸዋ ሰው
ሳይቆጣ አይቀርም። ነገር ግን ሰውን ፈርቶ አውነቱን የሚሸሽግ ሰው እንደ ወንድ
ይቆጠራልን፤ መንግሥቱንም የሚወድ ሰው ያ ቅዱስ ቅዱስ የሚለው አይደለም ጥፋቱን
ይገለጽበታል እንጂ።

Now fear has entered the heart of the author, for he is going to examine the case of the Shāwans. Vain people like only to be praised, not to be criticized. Thus, many Shāwans are likely to be angry [at what I am going to write]. But, to be afraid to tell the truth is a sign of cowardice. He who truly loves his government does not delude it with adulation; rather, he points out its mistakes for it.⁷²

He then proceeds to draw the contrast between the travails of a Tēwodros who suffered because he tried to change his country and the tranquillity of a Menilek who was revered by his people because he was prepared to leave them unperturbed by too many novelties. Generosity and

⁶⁹ This, as is commonly known, was the cause of the diplomatic imbroglio that ultimately led to the Battle of Adwa.

⁷⁰ See above, pp. 53–4.

⁷¹ Unpublished Autobiography, I: 244, 249.

⁷² 'Menilek': 342–3.

tolerance, yes; but education, no. Such was Gäbrä-Heywät's verdict on Menilek's reign. He could not help but express surprise at the belated nature of the few innovations that Menilek introduced.

Täklä-Hawaryat and Gäbrä-Egziabhér criticized Menilek – in strikingly differing degrees of stridency – for his failure to consummate the Adwa victory by going on to liberate Eritrea from the Italians. Täklä-Hawaryat, who had accompanied his sponsor, *Ras* Mäkonnen, to the battlefield gives us a refreshingly original interpretation of Adwa: 'In the final analysis, the Adwa victory was a victory of the maid-servants and the pack animals.'⁷³ His critique of the Ethiopian command of the campaign starts with the siege of Mäqälé:

እኛ የመጣን ጊዜ የምሽጉ ሰራ ገና መጀመሩ ነበር እንደመጣን በቶሎ ወግተነው በሆነ
እንደአምባላጌ ጣንዳፍታ ይሰበር ነበር ራስ ግን ከፈረንጆች ጋራ መራቀቅ ያበዛሉ
ወደአውሮፓ ሄደው ስልጣናቸውን ሰላዩ ነው።

When we arrived at Mäqälé, the Italians were just beginning to build the fort. Had we attacked as soon as we arrived, we would have stormed them at once just as we did it at Amba Alagé. But *Ras* [Mäkonnen] tends to be too refined when he deals with Europeans, probably because he had seen their might during his visit to Europe.⁷⁴

Mäkonnen and Menilek were duped again when they allowed the Italians to go scot-free and rejoin their compatriots after they had surrendered at Mäqälé. But what, in retrospect, upset Täklä-Hawaryat most (in his words, 'it burned me like fire') was the failure to regain the lost territories after having shed so much blood. In the end, however, Täklä-Hawaryat pleads for a balanced judgement:

ራስ መኮንንና አጌ ምኒሊክ በዘመናቸው የሰሩት ሰራ ሊደነቅላቸው የተገባ ነው ግን
ስህተታቸውንም በኋላ እየገመትኩት መገረጫ አልቀረም ይሁን እንጂ በዚያን ገዜ
ዕውቀትና ኃይል በማነሱ ይቅርታ ሊደረግላቸው የተገባ ነው እነሱ በደክመው በት ሰራ
ተጠቅመናል በስህተታቸውም አደጋ ተቀብለንበታል እኛም ደግሞ በተራችን እንደዚሁ
ማድረጋችን አይቀርም።

Ras Mäkonnen and Emperor Menilek should be admired for what they had achieved in their lifetime. But I could not help being amazed as I reflected later on their mistakes. However, they deserve to be excused for those mistakes because they committed them out of ignorance and lack of power. We have benefited from their strivings, just as we have been exposed to danger by their mistakes. We in our turn are bound to do the same.⁷⁵

Such a plea would have been wasted on Gäbrä-Egziabhér Gila-Maryam, who was most unsparing in his condemnation of Menilek on the issue of Adwa. The letter that Gäbrä-Egziabhér and some other Eritreans sent to

⁷³ Unpublished Autobiography, I: 91.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 116.

Menilek from Tegray in 1899 must have been one of the most scathing letters that had ever been addressed to any Ethiopian ruler. It is a clear expression of the sense of betrayal that many Eritreans must have felt after Adwa. The authors had requested that it be read in public and then deposited at the sacred monastery of Däbrä Libanos, no doubt as a permanent testimonial to the perfidy of the emperor. But it is not clear whether he actually read the letter addressed to him. If he did, it is yet another example of the emperor's generally tolerant disposition, for there is no evidence that Gäbrä-Egziabher was singled out for any particular act of retribution on account of the letter during his subsequent stay in Harär and Addis Ababa. Here is a sample of the passionate denunciation, which incidentally reverses Afäwäraq's glorification of Menilek at the expense of his predecessors:

ንጉሥ ቴዎድሮስና ንጉሥ ዮሐንስ ነፍሳቸው ይማር አምላክ ኢትዮጵያ አያከበሩዋት
የጠበቁዋት ኢትዮጵያ እናታቸው፤ አርሰዎን ጃንሆይ ፍጹም አካላትዋ ቁረጥዋት። ከዚህ
የከፋም አንዱ ኔሮን የሮማ ንጉሥ ለቅዱስ ጴጥሮስ ለቅዱስ ጳውሎስ የገደለ፤ ይወስድ
የነበርኩበትን ስፍራ ምን እንደሆነ ላየውና ልመርምረው ብሎ እየቁራረጠ በእነዚህ ማሕፀን
ተሳለቀበትና እናቱን ገደለ። አርሰዎም ጃንሆይ እንደርሱ በእናትዎ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ ብዙ
ነገሥትና ጸድቃን ሊቃውንት የምትወልድ ሆድ ችሎት አግኝተው ሳሉ በሰንፍና ወይስ
በሞኝነት እየቁራረጡ እንደ የሰው ሸንት እያሳጨርዋት [sic] ይሄዳሉ። ይህም ሣራ
አይደለም የዝመራት። ገና ንጉሥ ዮሐንስ ሳይሞቱ ከእነዚህ ፈረንጆች ጋራ ተፋቅረው
ወደ አገራችን መግባትና መግዛት ያስገመራቸው አርሰዎ ነው። ... ምኒልክ ዳግማዊ
ንጉሡ ነገሥት ዘጋላ ወመንፈቃ ለኢትዮጵያ ይበሉት እንጂ፤ ንጉሡ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ
በሉ ታላቅ ድፍረት ነው።⁷⁶

King Teodos and King Yohannes, may the God of Ethiopia bless their Soul, preserved their mother country with great veneration. But You, Your Majesty, have severed its integral parts completely ... Even though Your Majesty had power to do otherwise, You are proceeding to tear to pieces Your Mother Ethiopia's womb in the same manner as King Nero did with his mother's. Either because of incapacity or because of stupidity, You are disposing of Ethiopia as a person disposes of his urine ... It was you, long before the death of King Yohannes, who, by establishing good relations with the *ferenjo*, allowed them to enter and rule in our country ... Call your reign Menelik the second, King of Kings of Galla and of half of Ethiopia.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Annexed to Taddia: 163–6. The letter is entitled: መልክተ ሐዘን ወሰቅቃው ምስለ ተግላጽ ወምከር ('Letter of grief and sorrow, combined with reprimand and advice').

⁷⁷ Quoted in translation in Tekeste, 'Gebre Egziabehar': 11. See Gäbrä-Krestos, *Yäälām Tarik*: 103, for a more moderate expression by another Eritrean of disappointment at the incompleteness of Adwa.

Language & literature

If the intellectuals' contribution to historiography is problematic, their place in the evolution of the Amharic language and Amharic literature is incontrovertible. The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed what could be described as the flowering of the Amharic language and literature. This was no doubt in large measure due to the expansion of printing, largely through the government's initiative. The distance that Amharic traversed in a matter of a century becomes apparent when one compares the rickety Amharic of the letters of early-nineteenth-century Ethiopian princes with the poetic elegance of Afäwärq. Only the fluent prose of Zänäb, the chronicler of Tēwodros, and some of the letters of the emperor himself, could be said to have anticipated the heights attained by the Amharic language in the early twentieth century.

Many of the intellectuals could be regarded as masters of Amharic prose. A significant exception, of course, was Wärqenäh. By reason of his foreign upbringing, his Amharic was far from perfect. His book on world geography, although written in Amharic, had a helping hand from Heruy. In fact, the exercise seems to have been mutually beneficial, as Heruy also managed to improve his English as he worked with Wärqenäh on the book. Probably because he spent most of his youth abroad, Gäbru, too, shows some problems with his Amharic. But he was able to write a book on Amharic grammar (with a corresponding English title of *A Short Guide of the Practical Amharic Grammar*), including in the final pages samples of Amharic verse.⁷⁸

Given his Tegréan background, one would have expected Gäbrä-Heywät to be even more encumbered by the Amharic language. He left his native Tegrä as a child and soon after left Eritrea for Austria. When he wrote 'Atē Menilek-na Ityopya', he had been back in Ethiopia for only four years or so and a good deal of that he had spent in exile in the Sudan. By what must have been one of the most prodigious feats of learning a language, Gäbrä-Heywät was able not only to write in Amharic, but to reach heights of excellence that few of his contemporaries rivalled. Curiously enough, his *Māngest-na YäHezb Astädadär*, which was written later and published posthumously in 1924, does not have the same bite and power of his earlier work. This may be partly because of the different natures of the two works, the first polemical and urgent, the second more academic and distant. At any rate, some of the lines of 'Atē Menilek-na Ityopya' have that kind of easy flow that one first encounters in Zänäb and was subsequently elevated into an art in the short sentences of Berhanu Zärihun. Such a quality often eludes even Afäwärq, the great master of Amharic prose, with his penchant for the verbose and the complicated.

Afäwärq's greatness is none the less an indubitable fact. Few people before or after him have demonstrated such superb mastery of the Amharic language. Few have ventured with such ingenuity into the hidden recesses

⁷⁸ Addis Ababa, 1915EC.

of that language to come out with a wealth of vocabulary and idiom one scarcely thought the language possessed. What a great service he would have rendered the language and posterity had he applied himself to the compiling of an Amharic dictionary. And how less equivocal his place in Ethiopian history would have been if he had confined himself to fiction and not ventured into the perilous grounds of history. For Afāwārq's greatest work remains his *Lebb Wälläd Tarik* or *Tobiya*, published in 1908.⁷⁹ Here Afāwārq had a free rein both for his imagination and his language. Here, his hyperbole and metaphors entertain, rather than damage. As Tamrat has observed, under Afāwārq's magical pen, 'man or animal, forest or desert, come to life'.⁸⁰

Atsmé, Täklä-Hawaryat and Heruy also made their own contributions to the evolution of the Amharic language. Atsmé's style, as some of the passages cited above show, continue Zänāb's style of short, powerful sentences. Täklä-Hawaryat not only demonstrated how Amharic can rise to the challenge of writing on such an arcane subject as agronomy, but also pioneered Ethiopian drama through his play, *Yawréwoch Tärät* or, as the subtitle goes, *Fabula* ('Fables') in 1913. His poems also had a rare quality of elegance about them. Moreover, he was to my knowledge the first to experiment with the versification technique of alternate rhyming. Tamrat complimented him on both his play and his book on agronomy and cited him as an example of the fact that, to the one with knowledge, language is an obedient servant.⁸¹

Heruy's abiding quality has been his moderation. His style is more prosaic than brilliant. But so is everyday life. Few authors can attain the exuberance of an Afāwārq. Not many readers have the capacity or patience to work their way through his labyrinthine metaphors and exotic vocabulary, either. Many settle for the likes of Heruy, who can explain and edify in simple language. Therein lies Heruy's place in the evolution of the Amharic language and literature.

A point worthy of note in this discussion of the evolution of the Amharic language is the way in which both Afāwārq and Tamrat contrasted its popular appeal with the esoteric nature of Ge'ez, the ecclesiastical language of Ethiopia. Afāwārq chided the chroniclers for writing in a language, Ge'ez, which few people understand, and expressed his hope that Tayyā, who had been commissioned to write the history of Ethiopia, would not commit the same mistake. Just as the European nations had developed their own national languages and reserved Latin for the church, so should

⁷⁹ It is also, of all the writings of Afāwārq, the one that has aroused perhaps the greatest scholastic interest. See Rouaud: Chap. 12, for a discussion of the novel. It has been translated, in abridged form, into Italian by L. Fusella, 'Il *Lebb walad tarik*,' *Rassegna di studi etiopici* (1951): 56–70, and into English by Taddesse Tamrat, 'Tobya by Afawerk Gabre Yesus,' *Ethiopia Observer* (1964). In 1958EC, a new issue of the novel was issued by the Ministry of Education to serve as an Amharic textbook for schools; that was when its title was changed to *Tobiya*, after the heroine of the novel.

⁸⁰ Tamrat Ammanuel, 'Selä Ityopya Därasyan': 41.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 42.

Ethiopians do for Amharic.⁸² Tamrat develops the theme further. After showing how translation of foreign texts forms the essence of Ge'ez literature and how this has generated and perpetuated a tradition of dependence in all scholarly pursuits, he concludes: 'It has been the lot of Amharic, not of Ge'ez, to express Ethiopian ideas through an Ethiopian medium.'⁸³

Another aspect of the intellectuals' contribution to the development of the Amharic language was their grammatical writings. In 1889, more than 30 years before Gäbru's grammar appeared, Tayyā had his *Mätshafä Säwasew* published at the Menkullu mission.⁸⁴ He was followed by Afäwärq, who during his productive sojourn in Italy, produced two works of grammar in Italian: *Grammatica* (1905) and *Il verbo amarico* (1911). Another work, his Amharic-Italian conversation manual, which was published only in 1934, might have also been completed during this period.⁸⁵ What lends these three works of Afäwärq more than scholastic significance is his attempt to grapple with the practical problem of reforming the Ethiopic alphabet. The major reforms Afäwärq recommended to rationalize and simplify the alphabet included: indication of gemination, introducing the zero to eliminate the Ethiopic numerals above 9, the extension of the punctuation marks, and the elimination of certain redundant or confusing orders of the characters.⁸⁶

The issue of reforming the alphabet was picked up and amplified in the 1920s, when a series of measures were recommended in *Berhanena Sälam*. One of them, written by 'the small student from abroad', was suspiciously close to Afäwärq's own recommendations.⁸⁷ Starting from the fundamental premise that every character had to justify its utility, as well as citing the need to make the alphabet attuned to modern technology such as typewriters, Kidanä-Maryam Abärra urged the selection of one of two or more characters with the same sounds. He dramatically illustrated his point by showing that, as it stands, seven variations obtain to characterize one single sound, 'ha' (ሀ፡ሁ፡ሐ፡ሐ፡ሀ፡ሁ፡ሐ፡ሐ).⁸⁸ The debate continued into the Italian period, when Mäkurya Wäldä-Selläsé proposed the idea of setting up a kind of academy under the chairmanship of *Afä Qésar* Afäwärq (as he had then become) to come to final conclusions on the matter.⁸⁹

A few words, finally, on the didactic character of the works of Heruy. As advocates of change, few of the intellectuals could fail to have elements of didacticism in their writings. But in no other instance was it such a dominant feature as it was in the case of Heruy. One does not have to read beyond the titles of some of his works to know what messages he is going to deliver. He is probably at his most direct in *LäLej Meker LāAbat Mätasābya*

⁸² *Menilek*: 6-8.

⁸³ 'Selä Ityopya Dārasyan': 36.

⁸⁴ Taddesse, 'Tayyā': 10.

⁸⁵ Rouaud: 218, 225-9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: 229-33.

⁸⁷ *BS*, 19.5.27.

⁸⁸ *BS*, 27.1.27. See also another recommendation for rationalization by a writer who gives only his initials in *BS*, 3.10.29.

⁸⁹ See *YäQésarū Mängest Mäl'ektāñña*, 24-30.3.40, 31.3-6.4.40, 7-13.4.40.

(‘Advice to the Child and Memorial to the Father’). Ethiopian fatalism finds literary embodiment here. Heruy also proffers such time-honoured precepts as ‘silence is golden’ and urges respect for all occupations. The political message is clearly conservative: obey your king and your superior.

But these do not exhaust the gamut of maxims that Heruy offers his reader. He has recommendations on diet and also suggests that one should always carry two handkerchiefs, a plain one for the nose and spit and a better-quality one for the eyes and teeth. Heruy directed his attention to children in a similar work that he published one year earlier, 1922EC, and which, as indicated in the title, was translated from English. It was entitled *Sukar-na Wätät YäLejoch Masadägya* (‘Sugar and Milk, for the Upbringing of Children’). The morals that this collection of stories was expected to impart to children were: love your enemy, do not desert your friend in adversity, do not cheat, do not run after the frivolous, too much money is that much worry, do not try to have the best of both worlds, do not rush to pass judgement, heed your parents’ words and, last but not least, always obey the orders of your king.

With three other works, Heruy was able to give more subtle, literary expression to his world outlook. These were *YäLeb Assab. YäBerhané-na YäTseyon Mogäsa Gabecha* (‘The Heart’s Desire. The Marriage of Berhané and Tseyon Mogäsa’), published in 1923EC; *Addis Aläim. YäQenoch-na YäDäg Adragiwoch Mänorya* (‘New World. The Abode of the Honest and the Kind’), published in 1925EC; and *Wädajé Lebé. YäSäwen Täbay-na Nuro BäMesalé YäMigalts* (‘My Friend, My Heart. An Allegorical Illustration of Human Character and Life’), published in 1927EC. The first dealt with the theme of marriage and the family, gently rebuking traditional arranged marriages and expensive weddings and giving tips on modern child-rearing. The second was a major treatise urging the reform of the Orthodox church, an imperative necessity if it was to withstand the challenges of Protestantism and Catholicism. The third takes the writer and companion – and the reader – on an allegorical odyssey through the Scriptures in order to unravel the mysteries of the world. It urges love, for ‘just as the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, so is love its ultimate’.

Seven



Social & Political Impact

In the preceding chapters we have described the lives of the principal actors and analysed their ideas. The story cannot be complete, however, without assessing the impact of their lives and ideas on Ethiopian society. This unfortunately is more difficult. To begin with, their impact is not as fully documented as their lives and their ideas of reform. Moreover, it is not always easy to establish a clear and incontrovertible connection between the reformist ideas of the intellectuals and the legislative or administrative measures of Ethiopian rulers. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the intellectuals' own writings as well as the contemporary historical records enables us to attempt such an assessment. The columns of the weekly *Berhanena Sälam*, so rich in reports of government appointments and legislation as well as in opinions on the burning issues of the time, are particularly useful in this regard.

The intellectuals & the rulers

One way of assessing the impact of the intellectuals is by examining their relationship, amicable or otherwise, with the contemporary rulers. This has already been suggested in Chapter 3. Here the matter will be treated in greater depth and detail and the different strands of the story will be pulled together in the interest of analytical clarity. The focus will be on the relations of the intellectuals with, successively, Menilek II and his partners in power (Empress Taytu and *Ras* Mäkonnen), *Lej* Iyyasu and Täfäri-Haylä-Sellasé.

It is, I hope, evident from the narrative in Chapter 3 that quite a number of the intellectuals, particularly those of the first generation, came into some contact with Menilek. Some of them were clearly patronized by him. Afäwärq was sent first to Italy and then to Switzerland through the

emperor's two foreign friends, respectively Pietro Antonelli and Alfred Ilg. *Aläqa* Tayyā was sent with the Rosen Mission (which had come to Ethiopia in 1905) to teach Amharic and Ge'ez at Berlin University. Likewise, Mäkonnen acted as Tāklä-Hawaryat's patron, arranging for his education in Russia. Those who got their education through their own devices, like Wärgenah, Gäbru and Gäbrä-Heywät, also found employment in Menilek's Ethiopia, although their relations with Menilek and Taytu could be said to have been far from smooth. But then the royal protégés like Afäwärq and Tayyā did not have an easy time either.

Of the intellectuals, it is Tāklä-Hawaryat who has left behind the most detailed accounts of his relations with most of the rulers mentioned above, with the exception of Empress Taytu, with whom he did not appear to have had any significant contact, either benign or malign. Understandably, Tāklä-Hawaryat was very much attached to *Ras* Mäkonnen. His consternation at the news of his patron's death, which he heard while studying in Russia, was most profound. Here is how he describes his feelings in his memoirs:

የራሱ መኮንን ምት በድንገት ግላበው እንደ መብረቅ ሆኖ አቃጠለኝ አረርኩ ገመንኩ
ሃዘቤ ሁሉ ተቃብሎ አገሪ ኢትዮጵያ የሞተች መሰለኝ ተሰፋ አጥፎ ገራ ገዛኝ ለትምህርት ያን
ያህል የተጣጣርኩት ለአገሪ ለግገልገል ራሱ መኮንን መላሯ ይሆኑኛል እኔም መላሯ
እሆናችኋለሁ በግስት ነበር ንጉሡን [እኔ ምኒልክን] አላውቃቸውም ... ወደፊትም ለመተዋወቅ
ችግር ባይሆን አይቀርም።

The death of *Ras* Mäkonnen struck me suddenly and burned me like lightning. I was mortified and distraught. It was as if it were my country Ethiopia that had died. I lost all hope and was confused. I had strived so hard in my studies because I wanted to serve my country, because *I had hoped that Ras Mäkonnen will be an instrument for me and I will be an instrument for him*. I do not know Emperor Menilek that well ... And it might not be easy to get acquainted with him.¹

On his return from Russia, Menilek gave him an audience. Inveterate acquirer of arms that he was, his interest must have been considerably aroused when Tāklä-Hawaryat told him that he had studied artillery. He asked him forthwith if he knew how to manufacture guns. Tāklä-Hawaryat had to respond rather apologetically that he was trained as an artillery officer, not as an arms manufacturer.²

Later in life, as he reflected retrospectively on the frustrations of his career, Tāklä-Hawaryat could not help but ruminate on how much more he could have done for his country had Mäkonnen and Menilek lived a bit longer.³ He was charitable in his assessment of Menilek's reign, crediting it, among other things, with the extension of the country's frontiers and the delimitation of its boundaries, the banning of the slave trade, the opening of schools and hospitals, the introduction of the eucalyptus tree and the

¹ Unpublished Autobiography I: 209–10 (emphasis added).

² *Ibid.*: 23.

³ *Ibid.*: 16.

appointment of ministers.⁴ Gäbrä-Heywät, as we have seen, was more critical. Gäbrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam was downright castigating, refusing to forgive the emperor's abandonment of Eritrea to the Italians.

Potentially, Afäwärq had been best placed to exercise an intellectual influence in Menilek's Ethiopia. Related to Taytu, he was also the person in whose education Menilek showed the clearest interest. He did render some services as interpreter at the time of Ras Mäkonnen's visit to Italy in late 1889 for the ratification of the Wechalé treaty. But his absconding from Switzerland with the two princes at the time of the Adwa campaign condemned him to a life of exile until after the death of the emperor. His only lasting service to Menilek's reign thus remains his sycophantic biography of the emperor.

The circumstances of that unfortunate escapade are far from clear. The pull from his long-time friend Leopoldo Traversi cannot be discounted, but it does also appear that there was a push factor. His guardian in Switzerland, Alfred Ilg, seems to have got wind of Afäwärq's letter to Menilek objecting to the introduction of the railway in Ethiopia and was furious at what he considered to be a stab in the back. Afäwärq pleaded for forgiveness in two successive letters, claiming that he was unaware of Ilg's acquisition of a railway concession in Ethiopia and that his objection was to the introduction of railways in general. He blamed *Grazmach* Yoséf for the calumny.⁵ The indiscretion appears to have cost him dear, for all his property was confiscated.⁶

Menilek remained unforgiving. He gently remonstrated with Ilg for lulling him into believing that the young princes under Afäwärq's guardianship were diligently pursuing their studies,⁷ but he was determined that they should pay the price for their misadventure. As he wrote to Ilg:

በነጉሣና በነጃው ነገር ምን ያናድረሃል። እኔ መስደዴ ጥበብ የተግሩ እንደሆነ
ይጠቀሙበታል ብዬ ነበር። አሁንም እኔን ጠልተው ከሄዱ ከሄዱበት አገር ይኑሩ ጥጋቸውን
ይፈጽሙ። እኔንም እንምጣ ብለው ቢልኩብኝ ጃጊዜ ጠልታችሁኝ ሂዳችኋል ከሂዳችሁበት
አገር ኑሩ ብዬ ላከሁባቸው። ለነዚያ ቀረባቸው እንጂ እኔን ምን ጉዳኝ ብለሁ ነው።

Why do you get upset with the affair of Gugsä and Qetaw? I had sent them so that they would get education and benefit themselves. Now, if they have turned their backs on me, let them have their fill of impudence in the country of their choice. They wrote asking me to return, but I replied: 'You have shown your hatred for me by going to another country, so live there.' It is they who are going to lose, not I.⁸

⁴ *Ibid.*: 243–4.

⁵ IFP, Afäwärq to Ilg, 6.4.1895, 23.4.1895.

⁶ IFP, Wälätä-Maryam to Afäwärq, 8.11.1895. Wälätä-Maryam was Ilg's first wife and hence apparently Afäwärq's mother-in-law. Afäwärq appears to have got rather deceptive reassurances from Menilek that he had been freed from all blame: IFP, Afäwärq to Wälätä-Maryam, 10.10.1895.

⁷ IFP, Menilek to Ilg, 21.2.1896.

⁸ IFP, Menilek to Ilg, 31.3.1896.

Although his career had a tragic twist to it at the end, Tayyā's relations with Menilek were much more cordial. On the basis at least of circumstantial evidence, Tayyā's ideas also seem to have had some impact on Menilek. The emperor's edicts on education of 1898EC (1905/6) and on the dignity of labour (1908)⁹ appear to have been inspired by Tayyā who, after his triumphant return from Germany, presumably enjoyed high esteem in court. But, as we have seen already, his troubles started soon after he settled back in his native Bägémder, and Menilek was either unwilling or – more likely in view of his incapacitation – unable to bail him out.

Empress Taytu's relations with the intellectuals were almost invariably troubled. Afāwārq's second mission was only partly in quest of further education. In large measure, it was to escape her growing hostility. Gäbru, Gäbrä-Heywät and Wärgenäh all fell foul of the powerful empress. In every case it had to do with disputes and disagreements over attendance on the ailing Emperor Menilek. The first two were persecuted because of their connection with the German doctor, Steinkühler, who had implicated Taytu and her cronies in the charge of poisoning Menilek. Gäbrä-Heywät had to leave the country.

Gäbru, along with the German doctor, Steinkühler, whom he was serving as interpreter, had to seek asylum in the German legation. According to a Swedish newspaper report, which put him at the centre of German machinations to dominate the imperial court, Gäbru was not entirely above blame, however. The report somewhat charitably added that Gäbru was acting thus 'partly for nationalistic and partly for egoistic reasons'. The German doctor's allegation of the attempt to poison the ailing Menilek was interpreted as a ploy to shunt off the powerful empress by implicating two palace officials close to her, *Azazh* Mätafarya and *Bäjerond* Mulugéta.¹⁰ A letter bearing the emperor's seal also put the whole blame for the poisoning controversy squarely on Gäbru in the following words:

ይህንን ሁሉ ያደረገና ሁከት ነገር ያመጣ የኔ ዜጋ የጀርመንን ጽንፋ የሚያውቅ ሰው ነው።
አሱንም እኔ እንዳልመረምረው በየነዲሩ ወሰደው ከጀርመን ሊጋሰዮን ቤት
አስተምጠውታል። ሹሜ ነው ዜጋዬም ነው ወደኔ ሰደድልኝ ብለው የጀርመን መንግሥት
ምንስቴር ደሰም አላለው። የግድም እንዳለመጣው የጀርመንን መንግሥት ግስተየም ይሆን
ብኛል ብዬ አሰብሁ።

All this mayhem is the work of a subject of mine who has knowledge of the German language. I could not interrogate him because they have taken him to the German legation and given him the protection of their flag. Although I asked the German minister to send him to me as he is my subject and my official, he was not impressed. Taking him out by force, I thought, would displease the German government.¹¹

⁹ See Mahtämä-Sellasé, *Žekrā Nāgār*: 600–1 and 421–2, respectively.

¹⁰ AA/R14903, German Embassy (Stockholm) to AA, 30.12.09, encl. For the harassment of Gäbru and the German doctor, AA/R14901, Scheller to AA, 21.7.09.

¹¹ AA/R14902, Menilek to Wilhelm II, 21.12.01/27.8.09.

Wärqenäh's departure for Burma in 1913 also appears to have been connected with disagreements with Taytu over the right diet for the dying emperor.

In contrast, *Ras* Mäkonnen emerges as most understanding and sympathetic to the intellectuals. At least four of the characters in this study enjoyed his patronage and protection. Täklä-Hawaryat, who grew up in his house, was a clear favourite although fate decreed that patron and protégé should not meet after the latter finished his education and returned to his country. Gäbrä-Egziabher's strident castigation of Menilek did not deter Mäkonnen from bringing him under his wing in Tegray and then taking him along with him to Harär. Wärqenah was invested with *gult* in Harär and then accompanied the *ras* on his expedition against Muhammad Abdille Hasan in the Ogaden. In his diary, Wärqenah confides that Mäkonnen talked often about Ethiopia's backwardness and his frustration at Menilek's not taking his advice.¹² Finally, Gäbru returned after his evangelical perambulations to the warm embrace of Mäkonnen, who gave him land and assigned him to head his newly established police force.

The intellectual who came to have the closest rapport with Iyyasu was Täklä-Hawaryat. Although, as we have seen, Gäbrä-Heywät seems to have written his powerful and eloquent recipe for reform, 'Aṭē Menilek-na Ityopya', with an eye to Iyyasu and actually ends his piece with an appeal to the young prince, there is no evidence that he had any access to him. Tayyā has also left behind two poems related to Iyyasu, presumably written in different moments of the prince's troubled life. The first gently urges the young successor to Menilek to shed off his youthful dispositions, for 'it is difficult to regain a bird and a government once they slip out of one's hands'.¹³ The second, no doubt written towards the end of Iyyasu's brief but eventful career, strikes a clear note of despair:

ወዮልሽ ለሀገር ሕገን ንጉሥሽ

ግልጽው የግጠጡ መኳንንቶችሽ

በጥጋብ በሰካር አያስጨነቁሽ

መቼም መች፣ መቼም መች፣ መዳኝም የለሽ ።

Woe to you, country! Woe to your child king!
Woe to your officials who start early drinking!
They make you suffer with gluttony and inebriation.
Never, never, will you have salvation.¹⁴

But it is when we come to Täklä-Hawaryat that we get the most richly documented account of the relations of an intellectual and a prince. His memoirs abound with anecdotes of Iyyasu's caprices and of his own agonizing decision to turn finally against him. At the outset, he took it as

¹² Wärqenäh Diary: 399.

¹³ Tayyā Papers.

¹⁴ Haylu: 21.

his mission to redirect the teenager prince, who was evidently going astray. He apparently composed his play, *Fabula* (considered to be the first play in Amharic literature), with a view to educating him through parables. The prince did show some interest at the beginning as Tāklä-Hawaryat read him the Aesopian fables. But he soon got bored and told him to go and read it to his father, *Ras* Mikael. Tāklä-Hawaryat concluded with dismay:

በጨዋታ እያሳሳትሁ ከተቃረብኳቸው በኋላ ወደ ቁምነገር አመራችዋለሁ የግለት ተሰፋ
ነበረኝ ነገር ጥን አዋክቢው በዛና ጉርፋ ወሰዶ ከዊኔር ውስጥ ጣለኝ አሰመማኝ ዋሻጅ
የግልዘልቀው ሆነ።

I had hoped to get close to him [Iyyasu] by telling him entertaining stories. But the distractors were too many and the torrent swept me away and cast me into the sea. I was drowned. There was no way I could swim back to safety.¹⁵

Tāklä-Hawaryat puts the blame for Iyyasu's lack of purpose and direction on *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis and the regent *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma. He particularly blamed the former for providing the funds for the prince's diversions in order to concentrate political power in his own hands. Abetting Iyyasu in his youthful predilections and pandering to all his whims, Tāklä-Hawaryat went on, were *Näggadras* Täsämma Eshäté and the young prince's Syrian adviser, Hasib Ydlibi.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the prince did seem to heed Tāklä-Hawaryat's advice occasionally. The latter claims, for instance, that he (and Ydlibi) were able to persuade Iyyasu to set up some kind of work schedule and to pass regulations on a cadastral survey and banning the *leba shay* and *afärsata* system in Addis Ababa. At one moment, too, Iyyasu made the interesting confession to Tāklä-Hawaryat that he was scared stiff of Täfäri.

Finally, when Iyyasu heard while in Jijjiga news of the plot against him being hatched in the capital, he turned to Tāklä-Hawaryat for advice, somewhat jocularly: 'As the saying goes, short persons are good for counsel and tall ones for throwing spears. I hear Shawa is plotting against me. What do you advise?'¹⁷ Tāklä-Hawaryat obliged by urging the prince to go immediately to Addis Ababa, sit in *chelot* (hold court) and apologize for his past indiscretions on account of his youth; the plot would then disappear into thin air. He also urged him to get married and have himself crowned as Iyyasu III.¹⁸

Tāklä-Hawaryat writes that what finally made him turn against Iyyasu was his open declaration that he was determined to convert the whole of Ethiopia to Islam.¹⁹ From then on, Tāklä-Hawaryat became a hard-line

¹⁵ Unpublished Autobiography, II: 297–301, 388.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 370, 384, 387. For an escapade of the young prince in Djibouti, accompanied by Ydlibi and his wife and daughter, see MAE, GUERRE 1619, Brice to Briand, 24.8.16.

¹⁷ Unpublished Autobiography, II: 369, 389, 404.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 405, 409.

¹⁹ It seems probable that this was one of Iyyasu's all too common unguarded outbursts and it is surprising that Tāklä-Hawaryat took it so seriously. Later, Tāklä-Hawaryat himself

opponent of the prince. Even Täfäri reportedly had to restrain him when he started enthusiastically to chart a plan for a military assault on Iyyasu's strongholds. He was given the less adventurous task of enticing *Näggadras* Haylä-Giyorgis, who also happened to be Iyyasu's brother-in-law (having married his sister Sehin) away from the prince's camp. Tāklä-Hawaryat also sabotaged a telephone warning about the plot that Sehin was sending to her brother in Jijjiga. He also seems to have had a role in persuading the rather reluctant *abun* to excommunicate the allegedly renegade prince.²⁰ And, finally, as we have seen already, Tāklä-Hawaryat got the opportunity for the only known application in Ethiopia of his Russian military training when he commanded the anti-Iyyasu troops at Miesso and subsequently led the campaign to Adal in pursuit of the defeated Iyyasu.

Thereafter, Tāklä-Hawaryat's fate became even more intertwined with that of Täfäri. In a way, that was as it should have been. For Tāklä-Hawaryat, who was eight years older, was closer by his upbringing to Täfäri than to Iyyasu. Symbolically, Tāklä-Hawaryat had witnessed the birth of Täfäri, being assigned the task of holding the sword that was traditionally believed to ease the mother's labours. (This did not seem to have helped much as Yāshimabēt, Täfäri's mother, died in childbirth.) Tāklä-Hawaryat grew up in the household of *Ras* Mäkonnen, who apparently envisaged the two young boys as future partners. Tāklä-Hawaryat recounts a touching episode which was to continue ringing in his ears until his return. The *ras* had suggested that, before he left for Russia, Tāklä-Hawaryat should go to Kombolcha to kiss Täfäri goodbye and was clearly dismayed when he declined to do that lest the Russian who was going to take him away go without him.²¹

But the two young men had no problem in picking up their friendly relations on Tāklä-Hawaryat's return from Russia. Täfäri invited him to lunch at Etégé Hotel and appears to have impressed him by his quiet intelligence and his general bearing. When Tāklä-Hawaryat decided to go abroad a second time, Täfäri had premonitions that he might not return as he had been frustrated by what he had encountered. But Tāklä-Hawaryat did return, bringing along as presents to Täfäri a gold-rimmed cup, a knife, a necklace and a gun, all bearing the latter's initials. To Täfäri's disappointment, Tāklä-Hawaryat declared his preference for settling at *Chärchär* rather than entering his service. What put Tāklä-Hawaryat off was the conservative entourage that surrounded Täfäri. In the end, however, he decided to tie in his fate with Täfäri's. Two things, he concluded, made him come to this decision: that Täfäri was the son of *Ras*

¹⁹ (cont.) writes (p. 461) that Iyyasu denied emphatically that he had ever become a Muslim. It is worthy of note here that Wärqenäh wrote retrospectively that Iyyasu 'did not become a Mohammedan, but his attachment with some Mohammedan women sent the Christian population mad with fear of his becoming one': *NTEN*, 6.12.41. See my *A History of Modern Ethiopia*: 120–8, for the whole debate surrounding this issue; see also Gobäzé Täfätä, *Abba Tēna Iyyasu* (1996).

²⁰ Unpublished Autobiography, II: 426, 430, 433ff.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 71, 124.

Mäkonnen; and that he would serve him as the 'instrument' (note this word again) to get Ethiopia on to the right road to progress.²²

Täfäri in turn seemed to have confided in Tāklä-Hawaryat in difficult moments. In a rare, if somewhat cryptic, letter in early 1912, he gives an explanation why he had not been able to return from the capital to his governorship in Harär:

ታዲህ አበባ የመመለሴ ነገር ፈቃድ አግዚአብሔር ነው እንጂ እኔ ተጠብቤ የሰፈሁት ሥራ
አይደለም ። ... ሳሰበልኝም ያሰበለት፣ ለጠላቴም የሚገባውን ዋጋ ይክፈለው ... እስከ ሃፈሰ
ዝም ማለቴ ምክርህን መቼ ንቂው ነው። ከዚህ ካልሰለጠነ ሕዝብ ጋራ መላኩ ጊዜ
አልሰጥህ እያለኝ ነው እንጂ ።

As to my return from Addis Ababa, it is the will of God; it is not something that I have artfully contrived ... May God care for him who cared for me and give his due to my enemy! ... I have kept quiet so far not because I took your advice lightly, but because battling with this uncivilized people is taking so much of my time.²³

Täfäri's image of himself as the harbinger of progressive times finds expression in another letter, this time to his unofficial father confessor (so to speak), the Catholic archbishop André Jarousseau, who had asked Täfäri to intervene on behalf of a protégé who had been fired from his job. Responding to Jarousseau's insinuation that the person in question was a victim of favouritism, Täfäri stated with confidence that 'such conduct has passed away with the old rulers'.²⁴

It is Tāklä-Hawaryat's contention that his relations with Täfäri began to turn sour after the latter's elevation to central power in 1916. He particularly resented the fact that Täfäri was working ever more closely with *Ras* Kasa, who was not well-disposed towards him. His first major appointment, as governor of the frontier district of Jijjiga, was thus in the nature of a happy compromise. It gave Täfäri the chance to tap Tāklä-Hawaryat's talent without having him uncomfortably close. And it gave Tāklä-Hawaryat the opportunity to create what he hoped would be a model of good administration without being encumbered too much by the centre.²⁵ His next appointment, as governor of Chärchär, probably had the same rationale.

At the root of the problem of Tāklä-Hawaryat's relationship with Täfäri was of course his stubborn sense of independence and his determination to serve his country rather than a particular ruler. This in part was what temporarily landed him in jail in 1928. Yet neither prince/emperor nor intellectual was prepared to give the other up. Tāklä-Hawaryat was eventually elevated, in September 1931, to ministerial level, thus becoming the first foreign-educated Ethiopian to attain that rank. Tāklä-Hawaryat also grudgingly continued to accept appointments, largely, as he says, out

²² *Ibid.*, 236, 264, 277, 279–81, 293.

²³ NL, *Däjjach* Täfäri Letterbook, *Mägabüt* 1904/March–April 1912.

²⁴ Capuchin Archives, 2R 198, Täfäri to Jarousseau, 27.6.19/6.3.27

²⁵ Unpublished Autobiography, II: 4–5, 14–18, 32ff.

of a sense of indebtedness to *Ras* Mäkonnen. The following conversation, reported to have taken place many years later in Täklä-Hawaryat's place of retirement in Hirna, encapsulates the incompatible temperaments of the two personalities.

**አፄ ጋይለ ሥላሴ - አንተ ኢትዮጵያ ኢትዮጵያ የምትለው ኢትዮጵያ ያለ እኔ ምንም
አይደለችም እድልዋ ከኔ ጋር የተሳሰረ ነው። እኔ ነኝ የማደርሳት ካለኔ ትኖራለች ብለህ
አታብብ።**
**ተክለ ሃዋርያት - እንዴት እንደዚህ ያሰባሉ? ኢትዮጵያው ሕያው ነች! እኛ ሁላችንም
አላፊዎች ነን። አስቲ ይመልከቱ! አፄ ምኒልክ ዛሬ የት ናቸው? አባትዎ ራስ መኩንን የት
አሉ? ሌሎቹስ ታላላቆችና ገናኖች የነበሩት ሁሉ የት ናቸው? ኢትዮጵያ ግን አለች
ወደፊትም ትኖራለች።**

Haylä-Sellase: You keep on saying ‘Ethiopia’, but Ethiopia is nothing without me. Her fate is tied up with mine. I am her destiny. Do not imagine that Ethiopia will exist without me.

Täklä-Hawaryat: How can you think like that? Ethiopia is eternal. We shall all pass away, but Ethiopia will remain forever. Look at what has happened: Where is Emperor Menilek today? Where is your father *Ras* Mäkonnen? And where are the other great and mighty ones? But Ethiopia is still there and will continue to be there.²⁶

In contrast to Täklä-Hawaryat's troubled relations with Täfäri-Haylä-Sellase, those of Heruy were unhampered by any ambiguity or ambivalence. With his unquestioning loyalty to his master, Heruy could be said to have formed the perfect antithesis to Täklä-Hawaryat, who had elevated insubordination and independence of spirit to the point of principle. Heruy was apparently in touch with Täfäri as early as 1912, when Täfäri wrote to him from Harär acknowledging receipt of his letter and his fourth book and urging him to keep up his work and to write to him without waiting for his replies.²⁷ Heruy served his patron with total and almost blind dedication. The prince and then emperor showed concern for his loyal servant, especially while he was having medical treatment in Europe in the early 1920s.²⁸ The almost total identity of interest of prince and functionary have been immortalized in a popular couplet, albeit in a vein scarcely flattering for their religious orthodoxy:

**ንጉሡ ተፈሪ ጳጳሱ ሕሩይ
የሃይማኖት ነገር ተርቶ የለም ወይ**

With Heruy as bishop and Täfäri as sovereign,
Haven't we bid goodbye to affairs of religion?²⁹

²⁶ Germachäw's introduction to Autobiography: 13.

²⁷ NL, *Däjjach* Täfäri Letterbook, 9.2.05/19.10.12.

²⁸ Lämna: 30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 63.

British legation reports of 1927 and 1928 also reinforce this unity of purpose, emphasizing Täfäri's isolation and his increasing reliance on Heruy and young educated Ethiopians.³⁰

What seems to have endeared people like Heruy to Täfäri was their perfect blend of the traditional and the modern. In other words, their modernity was reassuringly anchored in traditional moorings, very much like Täfäri himself. In a speech he made on the occasion of the closing of the Täfäri Mäkonnen School for the long recess in 1927, he emphasized the need to master traditional education before shifting to the modern. In a rather ill-chosen array of examples, he cited the cases of *Hakim* Wärgenäh, *Näggadras* Afäwärq, *Blatta* (as he was then) Heruy, *Käntiba* Gäbru, *Aläqa* Tayyā and *Ato* Wäldä-Maryam.³¹

On the surface, the 1924 tour of Europe was the high point of Täfäri's prestige and fame. Heruy, who not surprisingly was chosen to accompany the delegation, rises to the occasion and regales us with details of the itinerary. In the speeches welcoming Täfäri after the long absence, *Däjjazmach* Gétachāw Abätä, who received the delegation on board the ship at Djibouti, expressed his hope that Täfäri would introduce some of the things he had seen in the course of his tour. At Dire Dawa, *Däjjach* Emeru focused his welcoming speech on the nobles accompanying Täfäri and stated his confidence that, now they had witnessed the advances of Western civilization, they would assist Täfäri in his modernization drive. The empress confined herself to expressing maternal concern at the perils of the journey. Täfäri for his part vowed to restore Ethiopia to its ancient greatness by expanding education. Heruy characterized the tour as the height of happiness and glory (the two motifs of his story) for both the protagonist and those who were privileged to accompany him.³² In short, there were great hopes that the tour would serve as a major eye-opener to the grandees of the empire and ensure the country's progress. As the spokesman of the Ethiopian monastery in Rome put it during his welcoming speech: 'An ordinary mortal like me cannot be of much value to his country however much he may be educated. But you, since you are the lords, can modernize our country.'³³

But the reality did not quite match the dream. As the well-informed interpreter of the British legation, Zaphiro, wrote in 1925, far from strengthening his position, Täfäri's 1924 tour provided ammunition for his opponents. The cost of the tour was staggering, yet there was little to show for it (such as, for instance, the much-coveted outlet to the sea). Zaphiro

³⁰ FO 371/12339, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 30.5.27; FO 371/13111, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 6.12.28, encl. in Annual Report for 1927. These reports are interesting, coming as they do at the time of the trial of strength with the conservative wing of the establishment represented by *Däjjach* Balcha and *Däjjach* Abba Weqaw. The latter report concludes, probably in the light of Täfäri's triumph over his enemies, with the words: 'But it is Ras Taffäri and just these younger men who have the brains and who know how to use them.'

³¹ *Feré Känafer*: 24. See also *BS*, 31.12.31, for a similar line of reasoning.

³² Heruy, *Dästa-na Kēber*: 120–8, and, for some of the highlights of the tour: 33ff., 68ff., 85ff.

³³ *Ibid.*: 73.

rightly points to the composition of the imperial advisory council set up in 1925, with what he dubbed as 'Menelik's people' constituting three-quarters of its membership.³⁴ Of the 19 members of the council, only five (*Käntiba* Näsibu, *Näggadras* Zälläqä, *Ato* Fasika Habtä-Mikaél, *Lej* Mäkonnen Endalkachäw and *Käntiba* Gäbru) could be considered to belong to the progressive camp.³⁵

The *Morning Post* article cited above draws an interesting parallel between Täfäri and Amanullah of Afghanistan. Both princes came from a conservative and backward society, with a mountainous terrain and warlike people. Their countries also happened to be co-terminous with British territory. Both princes made European tours (Amanullah's was in 1928) which ignited an enthusiasm for progress and reform in both countries. An important point of difference, however, was Täfäri's more cautious approach, whereas Amanullah's headlong assault on tradition was to cost him his throne. Unlike Zaphiro, who ends his report on a rather despondent note, the article is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for progress in Ethiopia: 'it is possible that we may yet see the last of the independent African Empires giving the lie to the fairly generally accepted theory that the African cannot govern himself on modern and progressive lines'.³⁶

There are a few more records of the relations of the intellectuals with other members of the ruling class. Of these, one of the most interesting is a letter of Atsmé to *Ras Bitwäddäd* Täsämma written in early 1910. From this, one can gather that Afäwärq was not the only intellectual who opposed the introduction of the railway to Ethiopia. Atsmé warns Täsämma of the potential dangers of what he calls 'this horse of fire' and recommends that it should not pass Dire Dawa until Ethiopians have mastered its techniques. In view also of the increasing pressures of the European powers, he urged Täsämma to issue a proclamation declaring that Ethiopia was self-sufficient, that far from seeking protection it could be a protector, and that had it wished for protection there was no one better qualified for that than France, 'her father and mother'. He suggests that he seek advice on the matter from the French minister, M. Brice.³⁷

Täklä-Hawaryat, who had difficulties even with the somewhat more liberal Täfäri, could scarcely see eye to eye with conservative stalwarts like Habtä-Giyorgis, who chided him for his rashness, which he interpreted as ambition. Täklä-Hawaryat in turn confided to his memoirs a nuanced characterization of the old warrior, whom he described as 'smart' but not 'wise'.³⁸ Of the younger governors, *Ras* Nadäw and *Däjjach* Emeru had favourable reports in *Berhanena Sälam*, the former for his energetic efforts to

³⁴ FO 371/10877, Zaphiro memo, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 9.9.25. For a similar analysis, see the *Morning Post* of 1.2.29, encl. in FO 371/13838.

³⁵ For the list of members, see FO 371/1877, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25.

³⁶ FO 371/13838, *loc. cit.*

³⁷ IES Ms. 1599, Atsmé to Täsämma, 12.6.02/19.2.10. This is an interesting variation on the letter he had written a month earlier to the other stalwart of the Menilek regime, *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis, where France is described as Ethiopia's *mezé* (best man): see p. 104 above.

³⁸ Autobiography: 310–11.

introduce what he had seen during his various trips abroad (such as building schools) and the latter for his incorruptibility.³⁹

In concluding this section, it might be instructive to compare the relations Ethiopian rulers had with the educated elite and those they struck with the foreign counsellors and confidants. For almost all rulers beginning with Têwodros came to have a foreigner or foreigners in their court who served as intermediaries with the foreign powers or as initiators of modern technology. Thus Têwodros had the British John Bell and Walter Plowden. The former in particular was very close to the emperor, rising to the post of *liqä makwas*⁴⁰ and giving his life in the bloody campaign that Têwodros waged against his own relatives to avenge the death of Plowden. Emperor Yohannes had Kirkham, also British, who had come to Ethiopia with the Napier expedition but remained behind to serve as the new emperor's military strategist and roving ambassador.

Menilek and Taytu had the Swiss Alfred Ilg, engineer, purchaser, news supplier and adviser. The intimate relations between Menilek and Ilg are common historical knowledge.⁴¹ It is a measure of that intimacy that the Swiss was finally rewarded with the much coveted Ethiopian title of *bitwäddäd*. New light is shed on these relations by the Ilg Family Papers (IFP) recently uncovered by Bairu Tafla.⁴² The range of correspondents, spanning some two decades, included not only the two sovereigns but a host of other Ethiopian dignitaries and personalities, notably *Ras* Mäkonnen and others like *Grazmach* Yoséf, *Tsähafē Te'ezaz* Gäbrä-Sellasé, *Käntiba* Gäbru (or Gobaw as he was then known) and *Aläqa* Tayyā. It is evident from these letters, particularly those to Menilek and Taytu, that Ilg was indeed privy to a number of imperial enterprises: the timing of some of the campaigns of territorial expansion; the delimitation of the boundaries with the limitrophe colonial powers and the conclusion of other diplomatic treaties; the building of bridges and roads, notably the road linking Addis Ababa and Addis Alām, which was a major preoccupation as much of Taytu as of Menilek; and their foreign accounts.

In addition, not only did he keep them steadily supplied with Western goods and European newspaper clippings but he also wrote responses to some of the reports, and was needed as a kind of sounding-board for the Ethiopian rulers' reactions to some of the major international events of the time: the assassination of the American President McKinley, the Anglo-Boer war and the failure of the Russian imperial family to have male issue.⁴³ *Ras*

³⁹ BS, 12.8.26, 10.11.27, 17.11.27.

⁴⁰ Traditionally the *liqä makwas* acted as the emperor's double with the aim of misdirecting enemy attacks from the emperor to himself.

⁴¹ See in particular the two biographies of Ilg: Conrad Keller, *Alfred Ilg, sein Leben und sein Wirken als schweizerischer Kulturbote in Abessinien* (1918), and Willi Loepfe, *Alfred Ilg und die äthiopische Eisenbahn* (1974).

⁴² The first volume of the letters, translated and edited by Bairu Tafla, *Ethiopian Records: Selected Documents from the Nachlass of Alfred Ilg (1884–1900)* (2000).

⁴³ IFP. Sec, among others, Taytu to Ilg, 19.6.1887/25.2.1895; 17.7.1894/26.3.1902; 24.2.1895/3.11.1902; Menilek to Ilg, 12.12.1892/18.08.1900; 5.1.1893/15.09.1900; 9.11.1893/16.7.1901; 17.12.1893/23.8.1901; 7.1.1894/17.9.1901; 12.1.1894/22.9.1901;

Mäkonnen probably expressed his own as well as the imperial couple's sentiments when, at the news of Ilg's imminent departure, he wrote: 'We have benefited more from your knowledge than we would from those who tell us that they have come with new knowledge.'⁴⁴

Iyyasu's association with the Syrian Hasib Ydlibi was unfortunately fraught with bad consequences. But the two were certainly more than mere partners in morally reprehensible escapades, as British reports have it. The young prince tried to use the foreigner in some of his novel administrative set-ups. Ydlibi was thus instrumental in implementing Iyyasu's scheme of an administration for the western frontier province of Gambélla independent of the competing provinces of Sayyo and Gore. More significantly, Ydlibi, as *näggadras* of Harär, was Iyyasu's principal agent in tapping the resources of that lucrative commercial entrepôt.⁴⁵

When we come to Täfäri, his relationship with the Catholic archbishop of Harär, André Jarosseau, is somewhat reminiscent of Menilek's relationship with Ilg, although prince and bishop often had to exchange their views by correspondence rather than through direct contact. But that correspondence, in which Täfäri kept the archbishop informed of practically all his actions and important events, is as vital in reconstructing the evolution of Täfäri's career as the Ilg papers are for Menilek's reign.⁴⁶ In addition to his semi-spiritual and semi-secular communion with Jarosseau, Täfäri – and later as Emperor Haylä-Selläsé – followed a policy of recruiting foreign advisers to help him in the process of modernization. The Americans E.A. Colson (finance), John Spencer (foreign affairs) and Ernest Work (education), the British Frank de Halpert (interior) and the Swede J. Kolmodin (foreign affairs) are some of the more prominent examples.

In the realm of interaction with the outside world and the introduction of some of the tangible benefits of modern technology, it is difficult to imagine any Ethiopian with the kind of indispensability that Ilg had for Menilek and Taytu. Few Ethiopians, particularly among the educated, were as favoured, either. But, as some of the exchanges indicate, the imperial couple had to reassure him from time to time that they would not change him for anyone else, suggesting that there might have been quarters who resented the confidence and trust the Swiss counsellor enjoyed. And there finally came a time when he had to ask to return to his country.

With Täfäri–Haylä-Selläsé, we seem to have a situation where he kept a delicate balance between his foreign partners, be it Jarosseau, who was needed for his paternal guidance, or the advisers, whose technical expertise was appreciated, and the emerging educated elite. That elite also became

⁴³ (cont.) 10.7.1895/19.3.1903; Ilg to Menilek, 10.2.1895/20.10.1902.

⁴⁴ IFP, Mäkonnen to Ilg, 28.2.1899(?) / 7.11.1906. Mäkonnen might have been referring here to the large influx of foreigners to Ethiopia following the Adwa victory. At this stage, there were not that many educated Ethiopians to serve as a comparison.

⁴⁵ Bahru, 'Relations': 140; Bahru, 'Concessions and Concession-hunters': 367.

⁴⁶ Initially deposited at Toulouse, most of the Capuchin papers have now been transferred to the Catholic seminary on the outskirts of Rome, where microfilms have been made for the IES library.

increasingly resentful of the role that the foreigners were allowed to exercise in Ethiopian affairs. Gradually, responding probably more to his own sense of confidence than to the resentments of the intellectuals, he shed the foreign advisers and began to entrust greater responsibilities to Ethiopians. The trend became even more pronounced after 1941. Needless to say, more and more the loyal and unquestioning type like Heruy were selected to that privileged position rather than the independent-minded like Täklä-Hawaryat.

Administrative positions

Another way of assessing the impact that the intellectuals made on society is by looking into the positions that they managed to occupy in the administrative hierarchy. As we have seen in Chapter 3, some managed to rise to ministerial level by the 1930s. Ironically, it was Täklä-Hawaryat, one of the most independent-minded of them all, who was among the first to attain that distinction. Otherwise, the intellectuals were generally preferred for positions immediately subordinate to those of ministers, which were generally the preserve of the more trustworthy old guard.

When Menilek set up his ministries in 1907, few had any illusions that he was instituting ministerial government in the strict sense of the word. Two factors were paramount in the introduction of that novel institution: giving government some measure of continuity in the difficult years that Menilek foresaw following his stroke and conforming at least to the outward norms of European government.⁴⁷ Least of all did the emperor contemplate entrusting any of these ministries to any of the educated Ethiopians. The only person of that category who was even vaguely considered for a ministerial post was *Käntiba* Gäbru. But, as we have seen, the idea was given short shrift by Menilek's advisers, who could not imagine someone without any fief or retainers being elevated to such a post.⁴⁸ The only concession made to modern education was in the form of an invitation to Gäbru to attend the first meeting of the ministers. The Haiti-born French physician, Dr Vitalien, has left us an account of this event, which was memorable more for its ceremonial value than for the deliberation over affairs of government. Two priests had been invited to grace the occasion and Menilek was represented by his throne, which was placed at the end of the table. All present were treated to drinks and to a speech by Vitalien on the importance of keeping their deliberations secret.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of the issue, see Svein Ege, 'The First Ethiopian Cabinet: Background and Significance of the 1907 Reform,' in Taddese Beyene *et al.*, eds, *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, I (1988): 351–60. See also Bahru, *A Modern History*: 114–15.

⁴⁸ See p. 45 above.

⁴⁹ MAE, NS 1, encl. in Brice to Pichon, 9.7.08. In a subsequent letter, Brice reports that, at Menilek's request, Vitalien drew up a scheme for a prime minister, preferring *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis for that post, and for a council of ministers. Asked about his ministers, Menilek is reported to have responded that most of the ministers were only interested in

Further insight into the circumstances attending the introduction of the new institution is provided by a speech that Menilek made to his ministers soon after their appointment, in which he expressed his dismay at hearing Europeans say that Ethiopia was a country without law and that it had a government without rules and regulations. One of the cardinal principles of European government, he went on, was that the king cannot govern a country alone but that he should be aided by ministers and advisers. The ministers were told that they were chosen for the high posts because they had won his confidence, and that they should in turn choose and submit for his approval trustworthy subordinates; they would get their remuneration for their services from him, and hence they should not make extortionate demands on the people. Those who did not respect the rules would not only be disgraced but also excommunicated.⁵⁰

Not much seems to have changed some 25 years later in terms of ministerial responsibility, when Emperor Haylä-Sellasé had to admonish his ministers for some of their glaring failings. These included failing to come to cabinet meetings on time and dozing off during sessions. He continued:

... አሁንም ዛሬ ያለንበት ሥልጣኔ ለግዛቱ የጀመርንበት የጭንቅ ጊዜ ስለሆነች አምነን
ባስተመጥናችሁ ሥራ ለግናቸውም ነገር እናነተ ተጠንቃችሁ ሥራችሁንና አገራችን
የጊታፈርበትን ሰማችን የማይጠፋበትን ሥራ ካልሠራችሁ በመጀመሪያ አገራችሁን ሁለተኛም
እኔን ሶስተኛ እግዚአብሔርን አራተኛም እራሳችሁን ትጉዳላችሁና ለወደፊት በውነት
እየተጋችሁ ሥራችሁን ሰሩ።⁵¹

... as the time we are in is a difficult one, a time when we have started to introduce civilization, you should be careful to execute your assigned tasks in a manner that will not embarrass your country and disgrace Our name. Otherwise, you will end up hurting first your country, second Us, third God, and fourth yourselves.⁵¹

Täklä-Hawaryat, who as cabinet minister was no doubt eye-witness to these events, confirms the problems cited above, adding to those of late-coming and dozing during sessions that of wasting time discussing topics unrelated to the agenda.⁵² None the less, it is perhaps a mark of the weight of the sort of imperial injunctions cited above that minutes of cabinet meetings of the 1930s, for instance, recorded punctiliously not only the proceedings but also which ministers came on time, which ones were late and which ones had asked to be excused.⁵³

⁴⁹ (cont.) the honours attending the post and only the ministers of finance and the palace were doing their jobs well: MAE NS 1, Brice to Pichon, 8.8.08.

⁵⁰ MAE, NS 1, encl. in Klobukowsky to Pichon, 20.11.07.

⁵¹ MPA 369, minutes of meeting with ministers, 23.5.24/1.2.32. See also *ibid.*, 22.5.26/30.1.34, for a similar admonition communicated to the ministers via the Minister of the Pen, *Tsähañe Te'ezaz Wäldä-Mäsqäl*.

⁵² Unpublished Autobiography, II: 107.

⁵³ See, for example, MPA 353, minutes of meeting of 30.5.25/7.2.33.

As we have noted, few of the educated Ethiopians were able to attain ministerial positions. By 1935 only four had managed to reach that level. These were, in chronological sequence: *Fitawrari* Taffäsä Habtä-Mikaél, who was appointed minister of works in 1930;⁵⁴ *Blattén Géta* Heruy and *Bajerond* Täklä-Hawaryat, who became, respectively, ministers of foreign affairs and finance in April and September 1931;⁵⁵ and *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädalü, who rose to that of education at the beginning of 1933, at the same time as Täklä-Hawaryat was designated ambassador.⁵⁶

It might be worth comparing this picture with the situation after the restoration of Ethiopia's independence in 1941. The Fascist order had not shown any mercy for the educated elite. On the contrary, they were the prime target of the backlash that attended the attempt on the life of Graziani in February 1937. Yet enough survived to be chosen for cabinet positions as the restored emperor strived to reassert his authority. The following illustrates the differing backgrounds of Menilek's first cabinet and Haylä-Selläsé's cabinet in 1941.⁵⁷

	1907 cabinet	1941 cabinet
Interior	<i>Liqä Mäkwäs</i> Kätäma	<i>Ras</i> Mäkonnen Endalkachaw
Pen	<i>Tsähafe</i> Te'ezaz Gäbrä-Selläsé Wäldä-Arägay	<i>Tsähafe</i> Te'ezaz Wäldä- Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes
Foreign Affairs	<i>Näggadras</i> Haylä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Mikaél	<i>Blattén Géta</i> Lorenzo Ta'ezaz
Education	(the <i>abun</i>)	<i>Ato</i> Mäkonnen Dästa
Justice	<i>Afa-Negus</i> Näsibu Mäsqalo	<i>Blatta</i> Ayyälä Gäbré
Commerce	<i>Näggadras</i> Haylä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Mikaél	<i>Ato</i> Gäbrä-Egziabher François
Post, Telegraphs & Telephones	<i>Lej</i> Bäyyänä Yemär	<i>Ato</i> Bälachaw Yadäté
Finance	<i>Bajerond</i> Mulugéta	Director only
Works	<i>Qäññazmach</i> Mäkonnen Täwänd Bälay	Director only

In general, it was for more junior positions that the educated elite were preferred in Ethiopia before 1935. As already stated, many were selected to serve as directors and directors-general. Heruy himself was director-general before he became minister of foreign affairs. Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld occupied successively the post of director in the ministries of finance and commerce.⁵⁸ His Raguél colleague, Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat, was

⁵⁴ FO 371/15389, Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for quarter ended December 1931, encl. in Barton to Henderson, 3.2.31.

⁵⁵ See pp. 62 and 72 above.

⁵⁶ *BS*, 12.1.33.

⁵⁷ Mahtämä-Selläsé, *Žekrä Nägär*: 54, and Haylä-Selläsé, *Heywäté-na YäItyopya Ermeja*, II: 323.

⁵⁸ FO 371/15389, Barton to Reading, 19.9.31.

likewise consecutively director in the ministries of works and agriculture.⁵⁹ Gäbrä-Egziabher François distinguished himself as director of Addis Ababa Customs and another member of the young Catholics, Berhanä Marqos, served as director in the Ministry of Posts. Kidanä-Maryam Abärä had an analogous position in the Ministry of Education.⁶⁰ Although a lot has been written about this system of attaching educated directors to more tradition-bound ministers, it is worth quoting here at length (by virtue of its lucid exposition) the observation of the American minister in Addis Ababa, Southard:

In each Ethiopian Ministry there is usually a Director who ranks immediately after the Minister and is in effect the executive officer of the organization. The Ministers are usually feudal chieftains belonging more or less to the conservative class of Ethiopians while the Directors are usually young men with either European education or contacts which enable them to assist in carrying out the emperor's plans for modernization of his Government. These younger men are usually also personal favorites of the Emperor and influential with him. Obviously their power or influence within the Ministry concerned frequently outweighs that of the Minister himself who is often little more than a figure-head.⁶¹

Another post, somewhat subordinate to that of director or director-general, to which the educated were usually assigned was that of secretary or secretary-general. Thus, in early 1927, Berhanä Marqos temporarily replaced Sahlé Tsädalu as 'foreign secretary', until he in turn had to give way to Heruy, who came with the more exalted title of director-general. Berhanä's departure was very much regretted by the British minister, who complimented him not only on his French education but also on his 'quick intellect' and his capacity 'to shoulder responsibility and to give straighter answers than *Ras Täfäri* himself'.⁶² In the same year, a system – probably short-lived – of assigning secretaries for the three major legations (British, French and Italian) was introduced. The three respective designates were Zäwdé Taddäsä, Täsfayé Tägäñ and Wäldä-Giyorgis (Wäldä-Yohannes?).⁶³ At the same time that it reported the appointment of Takkälä as director of works, *Berhanena Sälam* celebrated the appointment of Zäwdé Bälaynäh as secretary-general in the Ministry of Works soon after his return from his engineering studies abroad, without having to go through the customary *däjj tenat*.⁶⁴ In 1934, one of the sons of Heruy, Sirak, became secretary-general under his father, thereby replacing Wäldä-Giyorgis, who became director in the Ministry of the Pen.⁶⁵

There were also a number of institutions requiring special skills which became the natural preserve of the educated elite. One example was the

⁵⁹ BS, 12.1.33.

⁶⁰ BS, 5.10.33.

⁶¹ US 884.002/13, Southard to Sec. of St., 26.1.31.

⁶² FO 371/12339, Bentinck to Chamberlain, 28.2.27, 26.8.27.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ BS, 19.11.31.

⁶⁵ BS, 9.8.34.

post of controller of the Franco-Ethiopian railway, occupied by, among others, Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ, Haylä-Maryam (Särayon?) and Bälachäw Yadäté.⁶⁶ The presidency of the special court set up to adjudicate cases involving expatriates and nationals was another preferred post for the educated elite. Thus, it was occupied at different times by Heruy (1921), Afäwärq (1925), Wärqenäh (1928) and Ayyälä Gäbré (1932).⁶⁷ More significantly, the Ethiopian members of the board of the newly set up Bank of Ethiopia in 1931 came entirely from that elite. Of the total ten members, four were foreigners and the six Ethiopians were: Täklä-Hawaryat, Mäkonnen Habtä-Wald, Heruy, Wäldä-Maryam Ayyälä, Taffäsä Habtä-Mikaél and Sahlé Tsädalü.⁶⁸ Similarly, a commission set up in the same year to discuss the alcohol monopoly had as its members, in addition to three foreign advisers of the government and two other Ethiopians, the following: Mäkonnen Habtä-Wald (who chaired it), Täklä-Hawaryat, Berhanä Marqos, Ayyälä Gäbré, Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, Taddäsä Mäshäsha and Bälachäw Yadäté.⁶⁹

But there seem to have been occasions when members of the educated elite were included in government bodies more as a decoration than for any meaningful influence they might exert. In 1925, when it was found necessary to set up an imperial advisory council, five of the 19 seats were given to educated Ethiopians: *Käntiba* Näsibu, *Näggadras* Zälläqä, Fasika Habtä-Mikaél, Mäkonnen Endalkachaw and *Käntiba* Gäbru. They were thus clearly outnumbered by the more traditional elite.⁷⁰ It is conceivable that the council was a brainchild of people like *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis and was created in order to curb Täfäri's growing powers. The few educated Ethiopians might have been sprinkled in as a sop for Täfäri.

Appointments to strategic provincial posts were another method by which Täfäri-Haylä-Selläsé tried to make the best use of the educated. Administration of the lucrative Dire Dawa Customs was one such post occupied at different times by Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ and Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus – hence the title of *näggadras* which has been attached to their names ever since. Interestingly enough, Gäbrä-Heywät's son, Ashäber, succeeded to his father's former post in 1934.⁷¹ Governorship of the model provinces, like *Chärchär* and Guma, was another. First Täklä-Hawaryat and then Wärqenäh were appointed to the former and *Blatta* Déréssa, who was serving as director in the Ministry of Agriculture, was appointed to the latter in 1933.⁷²

Their mastery of foreign languages and in some cases their experience of life in Europe made a number of the educated natural candidates for diplomatic assignments. A series of such designations was made towards the

⁶⁶ FO 371/13838, Annual Report for November 1928–February 1929; FO 371/15389, Barton to Reading, 19.9.31.

⁶⁷ Zervos: 276.

⁶⁸ *BS*, 3.9.31.

⁶⁹ MPA 369, *procès verbal* of the commission, 5.4.24/15.12.31.

⁷⁰ FO 371/10877, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 8.7.25.

⁷¹ *BS*, 9.8.34.

⁷² *BS*, 12.1.33.

end of 1928 and the beginning of 1929. Two members of the locally educated, *Bitwäddäd* Getachäw Abatä and *Näggadras* Mäkonnen Endlakachaw, were designated ministers, respectively, to France and England. Both were to terminate their assignments under rather scandalous circumstances.⁷³ The ambassador-designate for Italy, *Liqä Mäkwäs* Mängäsha Webé, was a member of the old guard. The simultaneous designation of Efrem Tawäldä-Mädhen and Bäqqälä Habtä-Mikaél as consuls, respectively, in Paris and Rome must have been inspired by the same considerations that dictated the attachment of directors and directors-general to cabinet ministers.⁷⁴ In present-day diplomatic parlance, therefore, it might be more appropriate to call Efrem and Bäqqälä counsellors rather than consuls. After these first tentative gestures came the major ambassadorial designations of 1932–34, when Afäwärq, Täklä-Hawaryat and Wärqenäh were posted as ministers in Rome, Paris-Geneva and London, respectively.

Documentary evidence is scarce to assess how the subjects of this study fared in their various administrative positions. The little that we have tends to show, however, that they could not have had an easy time, especially if they happened to be strong-willed and independent-minded. We have already seen Täklä-Hawaryat's frustrations in his posts in Jijjiga and Chärchär.⁷⁵ Some of the letters of Täfäri to Gäbrä-Heywät while the latter was *näggadras* of Dire Dawa also give us a glimpse into the adjustments that he was required to make in the execution of his duties. There were two letters instructing him to give duty-free privileges, one to Täfäri's spiritual mentor, the Capuchin archbishop, André Jarosseau, the other to a certain Madame Nouyet(?), wife of an employee of the Bank of Indochina.⁷⁶ In another letter, Täfäri asked Gäbrä-Heywät to write to him weekly about his work, indicating the importance he attached to the Dire Dawa Customs.⁷⁷

As special governor of Chärchär (or *abägaz*, as he was officially designated),⁷⁸ Wärqenäh also had to contend with some capricious orders coming from Addis Ababa. In 1933 he was ordered to release seven persons he had detained on charges of keeping slaves; the reason given was that there were extenuating circumstances for all.⁷⁹ On another occasion, he was ordered to give out money from the Assäbä Täfäri treasury to petitioners (including *Grazmach* Wändyerad) who had managed to get the emperor's ear when he visited the *awraja* some two months earlier.⁸⁰ Interestingly enough, in another letter, Wärqenäh was instructed to pay from the Assäbä

⁷³ FO 371/16101, Annual Report for 1931, encl. in Barton to Simon, 20.1.32, reporting that the two ministers, who 'had disgraced themselves in Europe', were not allowed to return there after attending the emperor's coronation.

⁷⁴ FO 371/13838, Annual Report for the period November 1928–February 1929.

⁷⁵ See above pp. 60–61.

⁷⁶ NL, Täfäri Letterbook, 27.10.10/4/7/18 and 24.2.11/3.11.18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.10.10/6/7/18.

⁷⁸ See Capuchin Archives, Rome, 2R 209, Wärqenäh to Jarosseau, 5.13.24/10.9.32, for his seal and letterhead.

⁷⁹ NL, Haylä-Selläsé Letterbook, *Tsähafe Te'ezaz* Wäldä-Mäsqäl to Wärqenäh, 4.10.25/11.6.33.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.12.25/11.8.33.

Täfäri treasury the tax arrears (amounting to some 97 berr) of the same Wänderad, who was an official of the governor of the Hararge province where Chärchär was located.⁸¹ Other instructions included the immediate transfer to the capital of 23,808 berr (which was the balance of the revenue of the Ministry of Commerce) and the exclusion of some *gult* areas from his jurisdiction.⁸² Given these extraordinary demands on him, it might have been of some consolation that his request to manufacture bullets that could serve for training purposes was granted, provided (the adjoining injunction came) they were not used for commercial purposes.⁸³

Legislative measures

In this context, one might also raise the question of how far the intellectuals were instrumental in the promulgation of some of the administrative regulations of the time. In the first year of its issue, *Berhanena Sälam* carried an anonymous and highly rhetorical appeal to Täfäri urging him to institute rules and regulations. In their absence, the author would refuse to become a judge, an agricultural officer, a military commander or a provincial official. Urging Täfäri to heed well the counsel of 'his wise men', he concluded by recommending the implementation at least of the ten concise reforms recommended in Gäbrä-Heywät's 'Até Menilek-na Ityopya'.⁸⁴ The biographical essay on Gäbrä-Heywät reports *Ras* Emeru, cousin and life-long companion of Täfäri-Haylä-Sellasé, as testifying that Gäbrä-Heywät's other book, *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädadär*, had considerable influence on him and other members of his generation.⁸⁵

In the absence of direct evidence linking ideas to promulgation, one cannot avoid being circumstantial. The circumstantial evidence seems to suggest that the passionate appeal of the anonymous contributor of *Berhanena Sälam* cited above did not go unheeded. Gäbrä-Heywät's articulate recommendations for reform did not entirely remain a cry in the wilderness, either. As one can expect, it is those recommendations that could contribute to the strengthening of central power that were heeded most. Thus, measures of one kind or another were taken before 1935 to bring about the centralization of customs administration, the reorganization of the army, the issuance of a new currency and the introduction of a fixed tax (*qurt geber*).⁸⁶ But little or nothing was done to reform the Ethiopic alphabet, guarantee freedom of worship or replace the traditional *Fetha*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.8.26/20.4.34.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11.12.25/17.8.33, 15.1.27/25.9.34.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12.11.26/19.7.34.

⁸⁴ *BS*, 12.11.25.

⁸⁵ Tegabé: 30.

⁸⁶ We know from another source (MPA 369, *procés verbal* of commission, 27.4.27/5.1.35) that the members of the government commission set up in 1934 to examine the proposal for *qurt geber* were *Fitawari* Taffäsä Habtä-Mikaél, *Bäjerond* Zälläqä and *Blattén Géta* Sahlé Tsädu.

Nägäst ('The Law of Kings') with a modern code, although, in one of his letters to the French archbishop André Jarosseau, Täfäri asked him to send him urgently the Napoleonic code and a 'code comparée'.⁸⁷

In spite of his turbulent relationship with Täfäri–Haylä-Sellásé, Tāklä-Hawaryat was to leave behind the most significant association of an intellectual of the time with a particular piece of legislation. We have already noted the adaptation after 1941 of the administrative reorganization he appears to have recommended in 1932. But Tāklä-Hawaryat's great moment came with the drafting and promulgation of Ethiopia's first constitution in 1931. In his memoirs Haylä-Sellásé writes that he first thought of issuing a constitution while heir to the throne, but had to abandon the idea in face of opposition from Empress Zāwditu and her supporters.⁸⁸ His opportunity arrived when he ascended the throne in 1930. He commissioned Tāklä-Hawaryat, who could be said to have been waiting almost all his life for just such an occasion, to draft it. Tāklä-Hawaryat did so, on the basis of his testimony, by consulting the American, English (*sic*), German, Italian and Japanese constitutions. From internal as well as external evidence, it is manifest that the Japanese model clearly had the preponderant influence.⁸⁹

But Tāklä-Hawaryat did not have the final word. His draft was subjected to close scrutiny by the emperor and his close confidants, *Ras* Kasa and Heruy, and it appears to have been doctored to meet imperial needs. Tāklä-Hawaryat claims that he had given greater legislative powers to parliament in his draft and that deputies were to be elected. He concludes mournfully: 'The constitution was granted to ensure that the throne will remain within the king's family, not to put the law above him.'⁹⁰ Even more significantly, the constitution appears to have had the central objective of restricting the powers of the hereditary aristocracy.⁹¹

Interpreters & envoys

As in so many other non-Western countries, the first and natural vocation of the educated was what one may call linguistic mediation. Having acquired mastery of a foreign language, they were of strategic importance as intermediaries between the Ethiopian rulers and the foreigners – official

⁸⁷ Capuchin Archives 2R 195, Täfäri to Jarosseau, 8.4.15/17.12.22.

⁸⁸ Haylä-Sellásé, I: 147.

⁸⁹ For this, see Bahru, 'The Concept of Japanization': 9–10. Cf. FO 371/15389, Barton to Henderson, 27.7.31, reporting that he was 'approached for information on the laws of feudal England' and his American counterpart was asked for the American constitution; AA/R77889, Prüfer to AA, 6.7.29, and Dehaas to Prüfer, 15.7.29, for *Négus* Täfäri's urgent request for a copy of the 'old' German constitution and despatch of same. See also Heruy, *Mahdärä Berhan*: 19; Tāklä-Hawaryat, *Autobiography*: 101, 250.

⁹⁰ *Autobiography*: 102, 111–12.

⁹¹ See the perceptive judgement of the German minister at the time in AA/R77889, German legation to AA, 16.7.31.

as well as non-official – who came to the country. Understandably, the foreign languages that were most valued were French, Italian and English, probably in that order (although English tended to dislodge Italian in the last decades of this study). Täklä-Hawaryat reminisces how, on his return from Russia, his esteem in the eyes of Iyyasu and Täfäri sank significantly when they realized that he had knowledge of neither French nor English. He goes on to comment somewhat disparagingly how people who had managed to acquire a smattering of French and English as servants of foreigners had made a fortune.⁹²

Many of the characters of this study served as interpreters at one time or another, for instance, Afäwärq, who served in that capacity during *Ras* Mäkonnen's trip to Italy in late 1889. Gäbrä-Egziabhér was the Italians' interpreter in Asmara before and after Adwa and, as we have seen, used that position to pass on vital information to Menilek, with dire consequences for his own liberty. He was in many ways the spiritual son of Pétros Giyorgis, or 'Petros the Ethiopian' as he preferred to call himself, whose Ethiopian patriotism outweighed his loyalty to his Italian employers.⁹³ Gäbru mediated between Menilek and the German legation and Gäbrä-Heywät served as interpreter of the German doctor, Steinkühler. Heruy's attachment to the delegations sent to Europe and the United States (with *Däjjach* Kasa Haylu in 1910 and with *Däjjach* Nadäw in 1919) was presumably with the intention of having him serve as interpreter. But, to almost all of the above, serving as interpreter had only passing or temporary significance. Here we are concerned with what one may call the professional or full-time interpreters. And such a class came to establish itself in the early twentieth century.

The two Yoséfs, Yoséf Negusé and Yoséf ZäGälan, were among the precursors. The former's name unfortunately became entangled with the controversial Treaty of Wechalé, although he continued to enjoy Menilek's confidence for a long time. Among his greatest service to historians is his detailed and insightful account of the Adwa campaign.⁹⁴ Yoséf ZäGälan, like Atsmé, was one of Massaja's early converts to Catholicism. He started his career as factotum of the Italian Geographical Society station at Let Marafya. But he crowned it as a francophone agent of Menilek and his successors. He served first as Menilek's commercial representative and then Ethiopian consul at Djibouti. Regarded with an equally high esteem by the French, he was awarded the Legion of Honour in January 1916.⁹⁵

⁹² Autobiography: 236, 262. The Armenian informant, Avedis Terzian, who himself served as interpreter for the American legation (1928–37), as well as briefly at the German and Italian legations, underlines the important place of interpreters in early-twentieth-century Ethiopia.

⁹³ For Pétros, see p. 18 above.

⁹⁴ See Shiferaw Bekele, 'La lettere di Menelik, Joseph Negussie e Gäbrä Sellase a Mondon-Vidailhet durante la campagna del 1895–1896', in Angelo del Boca, ed., *Adwa le ragioni di una sconfitta* (1997): 391–6.

⁹⁵ MAE, GUERRE 1914–1918/1620, 'Renseignements fournis par un informateur très sur', 2.10.16; Heruy, *YäHeywät Tarik*: 84.

Of the Francophone interpreters, few probably attained the position of eminence of *Näggadras* Zäwǧä. He is said to have acquired his French language in France, where he had been sent in his childhood.⁹⁶ Both he and Wäsäné Marqos, a prominent Catholic, were very close to *Ras* Mäkonnen.⁹⁷ Täfäri too expressed his affliction at the death of Zäwǧä in 1922.⁹⁸ Zäwǧä's activity apparently spanned the gamut of interpreter for the French legation, arms procurer for Menilek and *näggadras* of Goré.⁹⁹ He also kept Menilek up to date with international developments by sending him newspaper clippings during his European trips.¹⁰⁰ An earlier French interpreter of Emperor Menilek was a certain Fanta, who retired to open an inn at Aramaya (Alämmaya) catering to caravans between Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and whose walls were adorned with a city map and oil paintings of female figures, souvenirs of his stay in Paris.¹⁰¹

But the most important of them in the early twentieth century was Mikaél Berru, for long the interpreter of the British legation. His employer, T.B. Hohler, the British minister in Addis Ababa, wrote, perhaps with a touch of partiality, that he was 'considered to be the best interpreter in Addis Ababa'.¹⁰² Mikaél was son of Berru Wälqayté and had studied French, Italian and Arabic, as well as English, in Beirut.¹⁰³ Although the British minister was complimentary about Mikaél's skills as interpreter, he was unhappy about his too close association with the palace. He complained that, as he spent practically the whole day there, he could see him only early in the morning or in the evening.¹⁰⁴

One would have thought that such daily access to the centre of power would have been seen as an advantage. But presumably Mikaél was giving more information to his compatriots than to his employer. And it was for hiding information that Wilfred G. Thesiger, Hohler's successor, sacked him in 1910. But getting rid of Mikaél was not to be that easy. He retaliated by unleashing his supporters in an assault on the minister and his chargé d'affaires as well as on the person who had succeeded him as interpreter, Zaphiro. The attackers were later sentenced by the Ethiopian authorities

⁹⁶ Heruy, *YäHəywät Tarik*: 79.

⁹⁷ In a letter he sent from Adwa while he was governor of Tegräy, Mäkonnen expressed his anxiety because Zäwǧä had not responded to his many letters: Capuchin Archives 2R 209/1, Mäkonnen to Wäsäné, 3.12.1891(?) / 8.8.1899. Those archives abound with Mäkonnen's letters of even greater affection and concern for Wäsäné.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Täfäri to Jarosseau, 20.3.15? / 29.11.22.

⁹⁹ Täklä-Hawaryat, Autobiography: 225; Capuchin Archives, 2R 209/1, Zäwǧä to Atsmé and Wäsäné Marqos, 1.10.1899(?) / 8.6.1907; Zäwǧä to Wäsäné, 10.11.1895(?) / 17.7.1903; Heruy, *YäHəywät Tarik*: 79.

¹⁰⁰ Capuchin Archives, 2R 209/1, 11.12.1891(?) / 16.8.1899.

¹⁰¹ Emanuela Baronen Mattl-Löwenkreuz, ed. *Im Reiche Kaiser Meneliks. Tagebuch einer Abessinischen Reise von Friedrich von Kulmer* (1910): 83–4.

¹⁰² FO 371/190, Hohler to Grey, 31.5.07.

¹⁰³ *YäHəywät Tarik*: 13. Täklä-Hawaryat probably had him uppermost in his mind when he wrote about Beirut-trained interpreters. FO 371/190, Hohler to Grey, 31.5.07, adds to Mikaél's repertoire of language skills Hindustani and German. For Berru Wälqayté, see pp. 16–17.

¹⁰⁴ FO 371/190, Hohler to Grey, 31.5.07.

to flogging in the marketplace and to varying terms of imprisonment. Following that incident, Thesiger wrote: 'The power Beru had got in the legation is astonishing. No Nagade [i.e. merchant] dared to hire us mules without Beru's consent who fixed the price and took his commission ... Beru is the cleverest man in Abyssinia and will always be dangerous.'¹⁰⁵

Contrary to the minister's prediction, little was heard of Mikaél after that incident. His place as the Ethiopian government man in the legation seems to have been taken over by Zaphiro's subordinate, Täfarawärq (later to become *tsähafē te'ezaz* and minister), who, again to the exasperation of the British, was getting too close to Heruy at the foreign ministry.¹⁰⁶

Although, as we have seen, most interpreters seem to have given loyalty to their country precedence over their employers' interests, they were not viewed by their countrymen with particular affection. On the contrary, they were often viewed with considerable suspicion by the mere fact of being in the service of foreigners.¹⁰⁷ An imperial injunction to ministers in 1932 warned them not to discuss affairs of state with *anägariwoch* (a unique translation, one would think, of 'interpreters') in the hope of getting some enlightenment from them. They were told to discuss it either amongst themselves or with their private secretaries only, for 'we are better off with the ignorance of our own people than with the interpreters' knowledge'.¹⁰⁸ Interpreters also became a target of criticism in *Berhanena Sälam* and a reader had to come to their defence, arguing that most of the interpreters were educated not through the support of their relatives, as had been alleged, but by their own efforts and with the support of individual foreigners. They had not aimed at becoming interpreters as such but were forced into that position because they did not have the means to bring their studies to completion.¹⁰⁹

Exposure to the foreigners' language and ways of life also made some Ethiopians natural candidates to serve as imperial envoys. In the past emperors had relied either on foreigners or monks going to the Holy Land to establish contacts with the outside world. Bermudez conveyed to Portugal, if rather belatedly, the desperate call for help against Ahmad Grañ of the harried Emperor Lebnä-Dengel in the sixteenth century. Part of the frustration of Tēwodros in his relations with the British emanated from his failure to get an intermediary who could get his message across accurately to Queen Victoria. Although Yohannes is known to have used an Ethiopian envoy by the name of Gäbrä-Egziabhér, it was Kirkham, the British sergeant turned general, who in effect served as his roving ambassador in the early years of his reign. Menilek, too, used foreigners as envoys and intermediaries in his foreign contacts, notably his Swiss favourite, Alfred

¹⁰⁵ FO 371/823, Thesiger to Tilley, 19.11.10. See also Aleme, 'Pre-war Attempts': 67, who argues that the whole problem arose from British dependency on Mikaél for his translation skills and their perpetual 'fear lest something may happen to Birru and the whole business of the Legation come to a standstill'.

¹⁰⁶ FO 371/13110, Dunbar to Bentinck, 1.6.28.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, the sombre assessment in FO 371/192, Annual Report for 1906, 10.4.07.

¹⁰⁸ MPA 369, 23.12.24/29.8.32.

¹⁰⁹ BS, 22.1.25.

Ilg. But, increasingly, Menilek was able to tap Ethiopian resources for such delicate assignments. Täfäri-Haylä-Sellasé not only continued Menilek's policy of using Ethiopian envoys for his foreign relations but also initiated the practice of Ethiopian diplomatic representation abroad.

A pioneer of such imperial assignments in the days of Menilek was a merchant by the name of Dägäfa, whose death in 1932 occasioned a lengthy obituary in *Berhanena Sälam*. The list of guests at his funeral reads like a *Who's Who* of the Ethiopian educated elite, with Heruy, Täklä-Hawaryat, Wäldä-Maryam, Ayyälä Gäbré and Bälachäw Jämanäh all present. He was said to have been attached to a French resident in Ankobär in the early 1880s 'in order to learn crafts and skills'. He also came to live in Rome for a number of years. He served not only as imperial envoy on foreign assignments but also as government representative for such concessions as the rubber monopoly given to Hasib Ydlibi. He also deputized for Ydlibi when the latter was made governor of Dire Dawa by Iyyasu.¹¹⁰

A more celebrated envoy of Menilek was Mäshäsha Wärgé, described by a British report of 1906 as 'an old comrade-in-arms and valued Counsellor of Menelek's'.¹¹¹ His first known assignment as an intermediary with foreign powers was as a kind of resident representative of Menilek in Eritrea in the early 1890s. As Menilek himself spelt out in his circular of February denouncing the Treaty of Wechale, the indignity that Mäshäsha was made to suffer at the hands of the expansionist Italian authorities there was one of the factors that soured relations between Menilek and Italy.¹¹² As we have seen,¹¹³ he had also been sent as an envoy to Cairo, Istanbul and Jerusalem in 1903 and again in 1905 in connection with the eternal dispute between Ethiopian and Coptic monks over the Der Sultan cloister in Jerusalem.¹¹⁴ In 1907, he was selected to head a prestigious Ethiopian mission to Germany and Austria with the objective of purchasing arms and seeking support for the Ethiopian claims to the cloister. The delegation was received by both kaisers and made the round of major cities like Hamburg, Dresden, Frankfurt am-Main and Munich and Vienna. On its way back, it visited Rome and Istanbul, where it again raised the vexed question of Der Sultan. The delegation is said to have included a certain Gäbr'él, 'an Ethiopian educated in Austria', as well as *Näggadras* Yeggäzu and a German half-caste by the name of Jakob Hall.¹¹⁵

Few persons matched, however, the record of *Käntiba* Gäbru as envoy of

¹¹⁰ BS, 8.9.32.

¹¹¹ FO 371/192, General Report on Abyssinia for the year 1906, Clerk, 10.4.07.

¹¹² See, for instance, Menilek to Wilhelm II, 27.2.1893, in Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany*: 218–19.

¹¹³ See p. 19 above.

¹¹⁴ See p. 50 above. Also in AA/R14893, German Consulate (Jerusalem) to AA, 25.7.05.

¹¹⁵ Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany*: 114; Bairu, *Ethiopia and Austria: A History of their Relations* (1994): 114, 116. The reference to Gäbr'él is in the latter work. One is tempted to suppose that this might be a corruption of Gäbrä-Heywat (Baykädañ), for he did have a sojourn in Austria and might possibly have been picked up along the way to accompany the delegation. The Austrian traveller von Kulmer claims, rather unconvincingly, that Jakob Hall was sent by Menilek to watch Mäshäsha and Yeggäzu: Matti-Löwenkreuz: 82.

the Ethiopian state. Fate and circumstances appear to have cut him out for the post. His first assignment, as Menilek's envoy to the Khalifa Abdullahi of the Mahdist state, cost him his liberty when Menilek chose to make him the sacrificial lamb for improved Anglo-Ethiopian relations. Thereafter, he accompanied Ethiopian dignitaries abroad on a number of occasions. He was detailed to accompany *Ras* Mäkonnen to the coronation of Edward VII in 1901. Some nine years later he and Heruy were members of the official delegation led by *Däjjach* (later *Ras*) Kasa Haylu to yet another British coronation, this time that of King George V. In 1919, he was again chosen, along with Heruy, to accompany *Däjjach* Nadäw, who had been entrusted with the mission of congratulating the Allies on their victory in the first world war.

Gäbru used the occasion to hold an extensive interview with the *New York Times*, in which he combined diplomatic appreciation of his hosts with public relations work for his country and government.¹¹⁶ By 1930 Gäbru had come to be regarded as a dignitary in his own right and was sent as head of mission rather than as a junior member. In the summer of that year, he was sent again to the United States with the purpose of searching for a financial adviser and securing a loan from the American government. Interestingly enough, the letter of introduction was written by none other than Heruy, Gäbru's erstwhile junior partner now elevated to the post of foreign minister. Filling the junior position that had been reserved for people like Gäbru and Heruy in the past was Mälaku Bäyyan, who had come to Ethiopia somewhat precipitately when he heard of the Battle of Anchem in March 1930.¹¹⁷

Three years earlier, as we have seen,¹¹⁸ Wärgenäh was entrusted with one of the most important missions abroad given to any of the characters of this study. He was sent to negotiate with the American White Engineering Company on the matter of the Lake Tana dam. On that occasion, not only did he have an audience with President Coolidge but he also visited the African-American community in Harlem. Mälaku himself, who remained in the United States after Gäbru returned in 1930, had apparently persuaded the emperor to let him assume consular prerogatives and conveyed a message to Colonel H. Murray Jacoby, the US envoy to the 1930 coronation ceremony, asking if he 'could so arrange it that the Government of the United States of America may permit me to issue the passports of our Empire to our citizens when necessary, and to visa all the passports for other travelers [*sic*] who are going to Ethiopia'.¹¹⁹ As the war with Italy approached, he was given the even more pressing assignment of negotiating 'with the best arms factory in the United States of America for the purchase of certain weapons of war'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *New York Times*, 10.8.19.

¹¹⁷ US National Archives, Heruy to Sec. of St., 1.7.30.

¹¹⁸ See pp. 39–40 above.

¹¹⁹ Jacoby Papers (Schomburg), Mälaku to Jacoby, 28.12.31.

¹²⁰ Jacoby Papers (Schomburg), Heruy to Jacoby, 9.3.34; also Mälaku to Jacoby, 28.6.34, 1.7.34.

Public dissemination of ideas

The intellectuals communicated their ideas of reform to the general public through two media: books and newspaper articles. As we have already seen in Chapter 4, a good number of them wrote manuscripts or published books of one kind or another. Although none could match the exceptionally prolific record of Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, the intellectuals as a group had an output that puts subsequent generations to shame. Not so easy to gauge, however, is the impact that these books had on society. We have already referred to some testimonies on the influence exerted by Gäbrä-Heywät's writings.¹²¹ A closer investigation of geography teaching in Ethiopia after 1941 might reveal that Wärgenäh's work on world geography probably had more consequence than it is usually credited with. I myself was struck by the discovery that a particularly memorable sentence on the meanderings of the Awash river (which was the common fare of first-grade geography in the 1950s) was taken straight from that book. Afäwärq's publications probably suffered from poor accessibility by virtue of being published abroad. In contrast, Heruy's writings grew in tandem with the national publishing enterprise and his didactic and allegorical style might also have contributed to his popularity.

But, as so often, it is more through the short newspaper articles than through the longer books that the intellectuals appear to have had a greater impact on society. And the contributors in that sphere were not only the giants that have occupied centre stage in this narrative but also writers of lesser renown and yet of remarkable perseverance. The name that clearly stands out here is that of *Fitawrari* (later *Blatta*) Déréssa Amänté, easily the most regular contributor to *Berhanena Sälam*. It is a measure of the greater public accessibility of the newspaper that Gäbrä-Heywät's *Mängest-na YäHezb Astädadär* came to be serialized in it in the second year of its establishment.¹²² As we have seen,¹²³ Mikaél Tasamma also contributed a series of articles on political economy to the paper.

We are also on much better ground to evaluate the impact of the newspaper articles than we are with the books. *Berhanena Sälam*, in particular, offers us considerable material for such analysis, be it in the critical assessments of some of its contributors or its own introspective reflections. Indeed, of the two major pre-war Amharic papers, *A'ëmero* and *Berhanena Sälam*, it was the latter that could justifiably be described as the organ of the intelligentsia. Although, as is so often done, counterposing them as conservative and progressive¹²⁴ is perhaps pushing things a bit far, there

¹²¹ See p. 181 above.

¹²² See *BS*, 28.10.26, for the first of the series.

¹²³ See p. 85 above.

¹²⁴ As, for example, in Rey, *In the Country of the Blue Nile* (1927): 28, where *A'ëmero*, revived in the wake of the appearance of *Berhanena Sälam*, is dubbed 'a reactionary opposition organ'. *A'ëmero* was initially directed by the Armenian, A.E. Kavadia. There is at the National Library a copy of a book on Ethio-Greek relations apparently written by him and bearing an

seems no doubt that the latter gives us a richer representation of the views of the contemporary intelligentsia. Few of the leading intellectuals of the time bothered to write in *A'emero*. Indeed, international news, more than national views, tended to be that paper's speciality.

Instrumental in *Berhanena Sälam*'s rise to prominence was the fact that it enjoyed the patronage of the heir to the throne, *Ras Täfäri*. The paper also had dedicated and energetic management. The director first of the homologous printing press, which was initially set up on the premises of Täfäri's palace, and then of the paper from 1925 until his death in 1932 was Gäbrä-Krestos Täklä-Haymanot. Born in Aksum in 1889/90, he was educated at the Swedish evangelical mission in Asmara. He became a teacher at the age of 20 and had to his credit a number of books, mostly translations, including a geography and arithmetic manual. His industriousness was proverbial. He was reputedly often too engrossed in his work to think of going out for lunch and caused something of a stir by refusing to sit the customary period of mourning for his deceased parents.¹²⁵ The weekly newspaper, which came out on Thursdays, was distributed by newsboys on horseback at 7 a.m. In an effort to help foster a tradition of newspaper-reading, it is reported to have been distributed gratis for a month.¹²⁶

Gäbrä-Krestos's inaugural editorial tried to set the tone. After dwelling on the symbolic significance of the term 'light' chosen as one of the key words in the paper's name, he defined the guiding principles of the weekly: 'to inform, to advise, to enlighten and fortify the minds of our people, not to blame and sadden people'.¹²⁷ Accordingly, a didactic tone pervaded the paper throughout its 11-year life. Contributors had frequent recourse to anecdotes to drive their points home and sometimes embellished their articles with quotations from the Bible. In clear contrast to *A'emero*, views dominated over news, the latter sharing the columns with advertisements on the last pages. After 1929, advertisements came to occupy a lot more space (up to four of the eight pages which had come to be the paper's standard length). The growing length of the contributions, which were often anonymous, moved the editor to impose a 50-line limit on all contributions and a fee of 1 berr per 50 lines for advertisements.¹²⁸ Invariably, there were

¹²⁴ (cont.) elaborate autograph, complete with seal, 'To His Excellency and dear friend Aleka Tayié, a remembrance of great esteem and friendship'.

¹²⁵ Heruy, *YäHəyewät Tarik*: 93; *BS*, Obituary, 27.10.32; Golden Jubilee Publication, preface and pp. 50–6, 65–6. The last-mentioned source has a number of interesting reminiscences about the early days of government printing. On completion of the maiden publication of the press – the religious tract *Yohannes Afäwärg* – the staff were rewarded with a bonus of overcoats and cash. Eighteen books were said to have been published in the first four years of the press's existence, not a bad record for the time. On Täfäri's return from his European tour, Gäbrä-Krestos had his staff lined up with newly donned uniforms and placards reading: 'Oh be happy Ethiopia the Blessed Land, Here comes Thy Light, Your Future Sovereign'. The wheels of the press required so much physical prowess that members of the Imperial Bodyguard were sometimes asked to lend a hand, most notably a certain Asfaw Abdi, famous for his muscular strength.

¹²⁶ Golden Jubilee Publication: 54.

¹²⁷ *BS*, 1.1.25.

¹²⁸ *BS*, 27.5.26.

reports of the ceremonies at the end of the school year (Täfäri Mäkonnen School being the clear favourite), including full texts of the plays performed on the occasion and lists of the top-ranking students. Other social occasions that were reported included deaths of prominent personalities and wedding and baptism feasts. After 1930, obituaries tended to abound. As a matter of fact, from that year onwards, there was a noticeable shift in the paper's emphasis from political to social issues.

It is far from easy to establish the circulation strength of the weekly. Zervos, who is not to be trusted on many issues, writes of a 'diffusion ... très large'.¹²⁹ Déréssa, whose intellectual life was closely associated with the paper and hence should know better, is less sanguine. He estimates the total number of copies sold per week as no more than 500. As it was common to pass on a copy to other readers, he estimates the total readership as being in the region of 2,000–3,000. So, he concludes in a despondent tone, people like him were writing not so much with the illusion of being able to reach a wide audience as with the hope of persuading the government to listen and respond to some of their pleas.¹³⁰

Copies of the paper found their way to Europe and even the United States and created considerable excitement among Ethiopian readers there. Heruy reported that he received three issues while in Geneva and that Ethiopian students in Europe eagerly looked forward to the next issue every week.¹³¹ Those in France expressed their joy at getting copies of the paper through his son, Sirak.¹³² Bāshahwerād was so exultant about receiving the paper, presumably at government expense, while studying in the United States that he was moved to expound on the role of newspapers in modern society and particularly in the expansion of education.¹³³ Afāwārq later elaborated on this and called newspapers 'chief advocate, teacher, cautioner, and protector of the poor', provided they steered clear of sycophancy and slander.¹³⁴ A few months before he died, Bäqqälä Zälläqä gave an even more elaborate discussion of the role of newspapers, contrasting the impressive growth of the journalist's profession in Europe with the fate of journalists in Ethiopia. Not only had the term 'journalist' a pejorative ring about it (very much like 'politician'), he explained, but the few weeklies that existed were also crowded with articles written in Ge'ez, in *gené* form (i.e. with hidden meanings) and were full of praise of the authorities.¹³⁵

Ethiopian readers abroad were often as interested in making their own

¹²⁹ Zervos: 269.

¹³⁰ BS, 16.5.29. Ato Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellāsé was equally sceptical of the wide circulation of the paper when I interviewed him. Haile Gabriel ('Versuch'), quoting S. Gaselee's *The Beginning of the Printing Press in Ethiopia*, also gives the figure of 500 for 1929, although it is said to have doubled in the 1930s; *A'emerö* had a circulation of only 200 in 1929.

¹³¹ BS, 15.8.25.

¹³² BS, 15.10.25.

¹³³ BS, 22.10.25. While heading the Dire Dawa municipality after his return, Bāshahwerād also subscribed to *A'emerö*: IES Ms. 1187, Ethiopian Printing Press to Bāshahwerād, 22.10.22/29.6.30.

¹³⁴ BS, 16.5.29.

¹³⁵ BS, 19.3.31.

contributions as in reading those of others. Wäldä-Maryam Ayyälä, while in Paris for a short visit, wrote a piece contrasting the cleanliness of Paris with the dirt of Addis and had a few nice words to say about the courtesy of the Parisian police.¹³⁶ Mälaku Bäyyan warned readers on the hazards of *kosso*, while ‘A child of Ethiopia abroad’ composed an essay against gluttony and drunkenness.¹³⁷

The general tenor of most contributions, however, was that *Berhanena Sälam* could hardly be expected to have much impact as long as high government officials did not even bother to read it, let alone contribute articles to it. ‘An Ethiopian abroad’, writing in the second year of the paper, found it particularly deplorable that people who had been educated abroad, like *Näggadras* Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyasus, were not having their voices heard.¹³⁸ But the most strident call for wider circulation and for the translation of ideas into action came from Kidanä-Maryam Abärra and Mikaél Täsämma. The former launched a vehement attack on some unidentified ‘traitors who prefer enslavement to liberty’; their day of reckoning, he warned, was not far off. He urged every reader of *Berhanena Sälam* to pass it on to another. Moreover, it was not enough to read, he argued, it was time for action. Apparently conscious of his virulent tone, he explained:

ምናልባት ብዙ በመናገሪ አብዱልን የሚሉ ሰዎች ቢገኙም አውነት ነው፤ ነገነትን አጥብቆ
በመውደድና የኢትዮጵያን ታላቅነትና ልማት በመመኘት እንዲሁም እንዳንድ የውጭ አገር
ጋዜጣ በግንብብ እንደግብድ ብያለሁ።

Some people may take me for a mad man for speaking so much! Yes, it is true that I have gone mad from a deep love of freedom, a desire to see the greatness and development of Ethiopia, and from reading foreign newspapers.¹³⁹

Mikaél went a step further and hopefully predicted a future where *Berhanena Sälam* would adopt a more critical stance towards the authorities:

በዓለም እንዳሉ ጓደኞቹ ዋናው ፈራጁ ብርሃንና ሰላም ነው። ግን ለኃያላኖቹ ሲሾሙና
ሲሸለሙ መልካም ምኞቱን ያቀርብላቸዋል፤ ሲታመሙና ሲሞቱ ያጥናናቸዋል። አሁን
ልጅ ስለሆነ ይሆናል እንጂ ለወደፊቱ እንደሚፈርድባቸው ጥርጥር የለበትም።

Like its colleagues in other parts of the world, *Berhanena Sälam* is the main judge. Nowadays, it expresses its best wishes when the mighty are appointed and decorated. It comforts them when they are ill or bereaved. It does all this because it is still in its infancy. There is no doubt that, in the future, it will condemn them.¹⁴⁰

Mikaél was writing in appreciation of Déréssa's earlier injunctions to

¹³⁶ *BS*, 28.9.25.

¹³⁷ *BS*, 7.1.26.

¹³⁸ *BS*, 8.7.26. See also *BS*, 14.10.26, for an appreciation of Wärgenäh as a government official with exemplary, if exceptional, commitment to the ideas circulating in the paper.

¹³⁹ *BS*, 15.7.26.

¹⁴⁰ *BS*, 25.8.27.

contributors to direct their advice and criticism to concerned departments rather than expressing them in a general fashion. At the same time, Déréssa expressed dismay that ‘the big lords’ were apparently not reading *Berhanena Sälam* and urged their sons and servants to communicate to them what they had read.¹⁴¹ The paper itself closed its second year with a scarcely disguised note of impatience:

በብርሃና ሰላም የተነሳ ለጥቅም የሚሆን ሕዝቡም ጥቅም መሆኑን የተረዳው ብዙ ነገር
ገና አልተደረገም እንጂ ሲደረግ ኢትዮጵያን በሥልጣኔ ጋይል ትጽናለች ... ይህን የመሰለ ነገር
ሁሉ በቶሎ እንዲከናወን ተስፋ አለን ነገር ግን ይህ ተስፋ እናደርጋለን የሚል ቃል በብርሃና
ሰላም እየተደጋገመ ሲነገር ሁለት ዓመት አለፈ አሁንስ ተስፋ የሰጠነውንና ተስፋ
ያደረገነውን ነገር መፈጸም ያስፈልጋልና ታጥቀን ተነሥተን እንሥራ።

Much remains to be done to implement the useful ideas expressed in the columns of *Berhanena Sälam*. When that is done, Ethiopia will advance in civilization ... We hope that all this will be accomplished soon. But it is now two years since such expressions of hope began appearing in *Berhanena Sälam*. Now, it is time to realize what we have promised and what we have hoped for. So let us work hard to that end.¹⁴²

In a rather ill-considered choice of metaphor, the editor concludes that one should follow the example of the Abbay, which feeds the country it traverses, and not that of the Awash, which vanishes in the sand.¹⁴³ A contributor picks up the argument in the next issue and writes of the tremendous progress Ethiopia could have made if the ‘lords above’ had followed the recommendations made since *Berhanena Sälam* was set up.¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, it was not all despair. As another contributor argued, even if the ideas were not being implemented, it was better to air them, just as an aborted child was better than one stuck in the womb like a bone.¹⁴⁵ The historian *Ato* Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya, who worked with the paper briefly, claimed that, while the ministers might not have been keen about reading it, the emperor and subordinate officials were, notably in such departments as the municipality and customs. The indefatigable Déréssa noted in 1928 the slackening of contributions and attributed them to two factors: frustration at realizing that the ideas of reform put forward were not implemented and disgust at the way in which some of the contributions were being misconstrued by slanderers and idlers. Yet he concluded that the writing should go on, reminding his fellow-contributors of the difficulties encountered

¹⁴¹ *BS*, 13.1.27.

¹⁴² *BS*, 30.12.26.

¹⁴³ One can of course more legitimately argue that the Awash, which patriotically feeds Ethiopia alone (before it vanishes in the Afar sand), is a better model than the Abbay, which feeds foreign countries more than the country of its origin. *Fitawrari* Tammänä Haylu chose a better metaphor when he compared writing in *Berhanena Sälam* to pouring precious white honey into a leaking vessel: *BS*, 12.8.26.

¹⁴⁴ *BS*, 6.1.27.

¹⁴⁵ *BS*, 30.6.27.

by innovators like George Stephenson (who invented the steam engine) and Samuel Crompton (the father of the spinning wheel).¹⁴⁶

And, as there were people who were unimpressed by the paper, there were the avid readers. In late 1926 the paper reported that 28 people accurately responded to its quiz to locate the number, page, column and lines of an issue where a particularly significant sentence had appeared. First to respond and get the prize was *Ato* Yohannes Wäldä-Maryam. Other respondents included *Qés* Badema Yaläw and Yoftahé Negusé.¹⁴⁷ In 1931 the paper, trying to evaluate its achievement after seven years of circulation, singled out for citation the attainment of independence by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.¹⁴⁸ This is an apparent reference to the appointment of four Ethiopian bishops in 1929, preceded by a period of intensive campaigning in *Berhanena Sälam*, notably by the eloquent Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyasus.¹⁴⁹ A German legation report confirmed this association when it wrote that the appointment of the four Ethiopian bishops was seen by 'Ethiopian nationalists' as a prelude to the eventual total independence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the end of Alexandrian hegemony.¹⁵⁰

But by then a new problem had emerged. Censorship had begun to rear its ugly head. An editorial note of May 1931 tried to explain why it had had to reject articles that 'were not fit for the time' and added that contributors would have refrained from blaming the editor for such measures had they consulted someone conversant with the law.¹⁵¹ What the editor was not prepared to admit was the fact that, with the consolidation of Haylä-Sellasé's power, the role of an independent press had diminished considerably. In November 1933 an order is reported to have come from the office of the *tsähafē te'ezaz*, stipulating that all printed matter would thenceforth be subject to censorship by his office.¹⁵² In early 1935 the government issued elaborate legislation investing the Ministry of the Interior with authority to censor all publications.¹⁵³ In the light of these developments, it is a matter of some surprise that the paper could begin its eleventh year by stating confidently that the time was near when it could dare to castigate and its readers could read such castigations. But, it warned:

¹⁴⁶ BS, 3.5.28.

¹⁴⁷ BS, 26.8.26.

¹⁴⁸ BS, 31.12.31.

¹⁴⁹ See pp. 108–9 above.

¹⁵⁰ AA/R77867, Prüfer to AA, 1.7.29. When *Abunä* Mattewos returned from Egypt at the end of 1923 after medical treatment that had lasted nearly a year, progressive circles were said to have been extremely disappointed as they had hoped to benefit from his absence to reorganize the Menelik II School which had been so much under his shadow: *ibid.*, Weiss to AA, 1.12.23.

¹⁵¹ BS, 14.5.31.

¹⁵² FO 371/18029, Annual Report for 1933, encl. in Barton to Simon, 6.1.34. Curiously enough, the British minister added that 'even Ethiopians regarded [the order] as a joke', as it was not likely to be enforced. By this time, the paper had also got a new editor in the person of Mahtämawärq Eshäté, former warden of Täfäri Mäkonnen School, described by *Ato* Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya as eloquent and courageous.

¹⁵³ BS, 7.3.35.

ነገር ግን ጌታ በወንጌል የሰው ልጅ በመጣ ጊዜ ሃይማኖት በምድር ላይ ይገኝ ይሆን? ብሎ
አንደተጠራጠረ ያ ጊዜ ለብዙዎች የሚያስፈራ መሆኑ አይጠረጠርም። የሆነ ሁኖ አለሥራው
የታግውም በጽሕፈቱ መልሶ አጥፊውም በሚገባ ተወቅሶ ፊቱን መልሶ አንገቱን ቀልሶ
ከሚሔድበት ጊዜ ያድርሰንና ሁሉንም ለግዥት ያብቃን።

As the Lord expressed his doubt, saying, 'Would religion continue to exist on earth when the Son of Man appears?' that time will be a terrifying one for many. Be that as it may, we can not but eagerly wait for it, to see the maligned defend himself in writing and the wrong-doer given a proper dressing down.¹⁵⁴

That prognosis was to be more pertinent to future generations of Ethiopians than to the readers of *Berhanena Sälam*.

Corporate identity

In most societies, it is as an organized group rather than as isolated individuals that members of the educated elite have succeeded in having a greater impact on society. This is generally achieved at two levels. Initially, members of the elite seek each other out and get together to express the identity of their views and interests. From there, they proceed to try to spread their views and ideas among other members of their society. The two levels express the progression of organization. Although often exaggerated, the writings and reports of foreigners of the late 1920s and early 1930s attest to the growth of this corporate identity among the educated elite. These reports even go to the extent of talking of a Young Ethiopia Party, thereby evoking similar developments in places like Turkey and Egypt, not to speak of the Italian *Risorgimento* of the nineteenth century. While one can discern a movement, essentially nationalist in content and orientation, among the educated Ethiopians of the time, it was still of too inchoate a nature to exert much influence on the rest of the society, least of all anywhere outside the capital.

The first known involvement of an intellectual in a public event was of greater political consequence than the activities of the elite in the 1930s. The public rally against the ministers in 1918 could be described as the first recorded urban mass movement in Ethiopian history. The role of Tāfāri in orchestrating this mass rally need not detain us here.¹⁵⁵ What is of greater interest to us is the role played by some of the educated Ethiopians at the time, notably Haylā-Maryam Sārabyon, who seems to have inspired some of the more virulent anti-ministerial agitation. The agitation was of particular concern to the foreign legations, who were quick to draw dangerous parallels with the Russian revolution one year earlier.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ BS, 27.12.34.

¹⁵⁵ I have discussed the alternatives in *A History of Modern Ethiopia*: 131.

¹⁵⁶ Bahru Zewde, 'The Military and Militarism in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia,' in Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily, eds., *The Military and Militarism in Africa* (1998): 266.

The next major outburst of public indignation had an external focus. In 1925, the British and Italian governments, in an exchange of letters between Mussolini and the British Ambassador in Rome, defined their respective interests in Ethiopia. Britain recognized western Ethiopia as an exclusive zone of economic influence for Italy in return for Italian diplomatic support for the long-standing British quest for a concession from the Ethiopian government to build a dam on Lake Tana. Coming as it did only two years or so after Ethiopia's admission to the League of Nations, the agreement was considered as an act of brazen violation of Ethiopian sovereignty. The indignation was most acutely felt among the educated elite. Charles Rey, a long-time observer of the Ethiopian scene, reported highly emotional meetings, often in tears, held by what he dubbed the Young Abyssinian Party. Foreigners were stopped in their cars and allowed to drive on only if they were certified to be neither British nor Italian.¹⁵⁷

Some foreign observers were able to discern, if only grudgingly, the seeds of modern nationalism in these confrontations. With characteristic obstinacy, they were bent on associating it also with Bolshevism. Infusing his factual reporting with a heavy dosage of racial bigotry, the British minister assessed the situation in 1927 as follows:

As in China and India, so in Abyssinia, there is now a small section of the younger generation which has received a smattering of Western education. These young men are satisfied with having scratched the surface and think they now know enough. In the town of Addis Ababa they consort on terms of equality with the riff-raff of Armenia and Greece, and in some cases of France and Russia. They get the idea that they are not only the equal, but the superior of the white man, and they strive to show this in various forms: refusing to pay salaries due to Europeans for services rendered, and by throwing them penniless into the streets or using personal violence against their persons and properties, &c. Amongst such people bolshevism will doubtless make rapid headway under the guise of nationalism.¹⁵⁸

His successor tried to give an economic explanation to this new nationalism, attributing it to the growing influence of Western capital:

The last decade has witnessed the dawn of Western nationalism in many a neglected corner of the globe. Nowhere is its appearance more incongruous than in this primitive State. Nevertheless, it is here, having been introduced by European capital, and is now striving to accommodate itself to the primeval surroundings. Patriots the Ethiopians have always been, as can be seen by their successful resistance down the ages to alien invasion. But their patriotism has been of a conservative order ... Now Western capital, not content to stand with folded arms before a barrier that has so long defied the entry of civilised thought, has embarked upon a more subtle invasion. Mammon, in fact, is taking up a cause long abandoned by the Almighty, and the Ethiopian is tempted to listen to his gentle whispers.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ FO 371/12343, encl. in Rey to Murray, 10.12.27, reporting and commenting on an interview with *Hakim Wärqenäh*, who described the agreement with Italy as 'the bottom of all the trouble' in Anglo-Ethiopian relations.

¹⁵⁸ FO 371/13111, Annual Report for 1927, encl. in Bentinck to Chamberlain, 6.12.28.

¹⁵⁹ FO 371/14598, Annual Report for 1928-29, encl. in Barton to Henderson, 28.7.30.

The American minister, although inclined to regard the actions and reactions of the educated as xenophobic, none the less gives a more concrete illustration of the circumstances that brought about the increasing confrontation with foreigners. Not only had the educated Ethiopians often been subjected to some form of racial discrimination while abroad but the whites resident in Ethiopia were also not prepared to accept the high social status that the Ethiopians had come to earn in their own country by virtue of their qualifications. The latter advised Emperor Haylä-Sellasé against the employment of foreign advisers as they were themselves now capable of executing the tasks for which the foreigners were employed. They particularly resented the high salaries paid to those foreign advisers, usually three to four times their own. Apparently, they sometimes succeeded in influencing the emperor; the case of a dismissed Cypriot accountant is cited as an example. They also objected to the high expenditure incurred by the coronation ceremony held mainly to impress and cater for foreign guests.¹⁶⁰

The reports of the American legation are also instructive about some early attempts by the educated to organize themselves. A 1930 report, after mentioning the numerous posts that members of the Young Ethiopia group had come to occupy in the administrative hierarchy, goes on to write of their plan to organize a club 'to provide social recreation more in accord with their acquired foreign tastes'. The report concludes: 'If this club movement persists, the increasing educated youth may some day become a factor of some potency in Ethiopian affairs, by the weight of organized group opinion.'¹⁶¹

The confrontations with foreigners, arising generally from what Ethiopians considered as the foreigners' arrogant and sometimes downright racist conduct, assumed dramatic proportions in 1933. At the centre of the controversy was the Tabaris Café, one of the night spots frequented by the Ethiopian educated elite. On 22 September a group of them were thrown out by the patrons. Six days later, the group returned and broke into the joint. Police had to come in to control the ensuing fracas. The club was subsequently closed by order of the Addis Ababa municipality. The incident is reported at length by the American legation, which identifies Kidanä-Maryam Abärara and one of the sons of Heruy as being in the forefront of the attendant agitation against foreigners.¹⁶²

What is of special interest is the common front that was being created between the foreign-educated and those educated in the country, such as

¹⁶⁰ US 884.01A/14, Southard to Sec. of St., 24.11.30, 23.1.32.

¹⁶¹ US 884.00/26, Park to Sec. of St., 20.5.30.

¹⁶² US 884.4016/5, Southard to Sec. of St., 14.11.33; Legation circular to all consulates, 30.10.33. See also Coon, who gives an account of night life in Addis, featuring the Palm Beach Café (where 'certain Ethiopian young bloods' educated in Europe and the United States danced all together, 'one of the partners impersonating a female') and the Tambourine, a variation on the Tabaris Café at the centre of the story, 'the most popular and most dignified centre of evening entertainment', featuring two Afro-American stars and yet paradoxically closed because of the discriminatory policy of its Corsican proprietor.

Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, at the time director in the ministry of foreign affairs, and Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld. Also supportive of Kidanä-Maryam were Bāshahweräd Habtä-Wäld and Ayyälä Gäbré. Kidanä-Maryam, who was 'understood to be working to enlist the cooperation of the powerful State Church in his nationalist movement', is reported to have found Ayyälä's Catholicism something of a snag. Although, thanks to the fact that 'Ethiopians are usually accomplished in dissimulation', Bāshahweräd and Kidanä-Maryam were outwardly friendly to nationals of the countries where they had received their education (the United States and Italy, respectively), they were 'said on occasion secretly to whip their associates into crusading zeal by tales of American and Italian color and race prejudices'. Foreign exposure had also brought in its wake the knowledge that white society was not as perfect as its representatives in Ethiopia made it out to be. As an Ethiopian 'friend' is reported to have told Southard: 'You foreigners have your peasants and your ignorant classes just as we have. We believe in superiority by birth and intelligence. We do not recognize merely a white skin as carrying with it any kind of superiority, but that is what we see the foreigner of all classes, in his own country as well as here, now trying to assert. We are learning a lot.'¹⁶³

The German observer Roman Prochazka, who reported to the American legation on the Tabaris Café incident, was thus not too wide of the mark when he wrote of a 'Young Abyssinian Movement' enjoying the blessing of the government. But he seems to have gone slightly overboard when he spoke of systematic active hatred against whites. With remarkable self-centredness, he equated the young Ethiopians' application of the skills they had acquired in Europe against Europeans as a threat to world peace. And, with characteristic nippophobia, he warned that Ethiopia, with the connivance of Japan, was aiming at leading Africa in a war against the white race.¹⁶⁴

That movement was distinctly francophone but not necessarily francophile, although France was the least objectionable of the powers. The movement even came to have an organ of its own, *Voix éthiopienne*, which, however, was stopped by order of the emperor after its first issue.¹⁶⁵ An idea of the strong sense of patriotism that permeated the movement is gleaned from the following national anthem composed by the director of Menelik II School, Bäqqälä Habtä-Mikaél, and read on the occasion of the closing of the school for the long summer recess. What is equally interesting about these lines is the fact that they centre on love of country alone and betray little of the personality cult of the emperor which was to characterize the national anthem adopted later.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ US 884.4016/6, Southard to Sec. of St., 12.2.34; US 884.00/299, Southard to Sec. of St., 17.7.34

¹⁶⁴ Roman Freih von Prochazka, *Abessinien: Die Schwarze Gefahr* (1935): 8, 12.

¹⁶⁵ AA 43760/43, German legation to AA, 31.3.30; Esme: 122; MAE K/60, Baelen (chargé d'affaires) to MAE, 21.11.33.

¹⁶⁶ BS, 9.8.28.

አገራችን ጥሩ ወንዞችን

ኢትዮጵያ እንልሻለን

መመኪያችን ውድ አናታችን

ክልሳችን እንወድሻለን

አርበኞችሽ አባቶቻችን

እንዳታጩ ነጻነትሽን

ጠላት ታግለው ብዙኅ ዘመን

አስከበሩት ምስጉን ሰምሽን

Our country, our river fine,
Ethiopia is thy name;
Our dear mother, in you we trust,
We love you from our heart.
Your patriots, our fathers,
Fought the enemy for many years,
Your freedom to preserve,
And your good name to uphold.

አገራችን ለም ምድራችን

ድምቅ ጌባችን ውበታችን

ለያስተዋልንሽ በዓይኖቻችን

እጅግ ይበዛልና ደስታችን

ወደአምላክሽ ዘርጊ እጆችሽን

ለሚሰጣሽ ልመናሽን

በከፋ ዓይን የሚአዩሽን

ይጣልልሽ ጠላቶችሽን

Our fertile land, our country,
Our shining jewel, our beauty,
With our eyes, you we behold,
And our joys are manifold.
Stretch out thy hands to your God,
Your prayers he will heed,
Thy enemies who harbour evil,
May he throw them to the devil!

Such patriotic sentiments were to find occasion for practical expression, most palpably among the Black Lions in a few years' time when Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia.

Alienation – cultural or intellectual – is a common fate of the educated, especially the foreign-educated. An element of alienation thus pervaded the lives of most of the intellectuals. A dramatic case is that of the artist Agāñāhu Engeda, who compounded his problem by returning with a Swiss wife from Paris, where he had been sent to study art at the Académie des Beaux Arts. Ladislav Farago described him as 'a disciple of the French impressionists', adding that 'instead of their pastel shades, he uses the bright colours that express the primitiveness of his country'.¹⁶⁷ Farago's admiration of the artist is reported to have evoked this telling response from Täsfayé Tägāñ, another intellectual of the time who was a close aide of the emperor: 'He is a talented fellow, but he stands just as much alone with his art as the Emperor with his new plans for governing. Many of us have brains, but we cannot all make ourselves felt.'¹⁶⁸

This was as much a collective self-assessment as it was an evaluation of the artist. Täsfayé himself was described by the famous journalist as 'a complete Frenchman. He made me laugh ... with his delicious caricatures of French political life.'¹⁶⁹ Täklä-Hawaryat too was made to feel his alienation from his countrymen on a number of instances, even by his generally understanding patron, *Ras* Mäkonnen. Once, after reading his fables to the *ras*, the otherwise urbane patron chided Täklä-Hawaryat thus:

¹⁶⁷ *Abyssinia on the Eve*: 111, 114.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 118.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 24.

‘Tell me, my son! Are ants and crickets capable of speaking in *your* country?’¹⁷⁰ The ultimate in Tāklä-Hawaryat’s estrangement could be said to have been reached when Tāfäri was accused of selling Hirna to a *färänji* (a foreigner, i.e. Tāklä-Hawaryat) when he granted him the fief there.¹⁷¹

The dietary habits and attire that the educated brought back with them all too often caused the first culture shock. In the nineteenth century Mikaél Arāgawi and another Fālasha returnee, Agazhā Sahlū, were dismissed from the audience of Emperor Yohannes because they had the audacity to appear wearing shoes.¹⁷² Gäbru, who strangely chose to eat *enjāra* and *wät* with knife and fork on his first return, provoked the understandable dismay of his mother, who asked him scoffingly why he showed so much loathing for something that he was letting into his stomach. Less understandingly, she reprimanded him for wearing heeled shoes like ladies. She was unmoved when he showed her how his feet had suffered from the mud and cold when he tried to go barefoot to please her. ‘All the more reason,’ she tried to comfort him, ‘they will be that much better prepared for hard times.’ *Negus* Tāklä-Haymanot of Gojjam, who briefly patronized Gäbru,¹⁷³ was more charitable on the issue of observing the rigorous fasting rule of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He told the newcomer that whether he fasted or did not fast was his own business, but that he should at least make sure people did not see him when he violated the fasting rules.¹⁷⁴

The question of Western or Ethiopian attire also occupied the minds of Heruy and Afāwārq, although less directly than in the case of Gäbru. Heruy’s *Addis Alām* has his hero locked in a lively dialogue with his relatives, who express their consternation at seeing him shaved and in European dress. ‘What happened? Are you all right?’ they ask him in shock. ‘How can you go so naked like a mad man?’ His efforts to explain the merits of European attire as opposed to the traditional one convinced them beyond any doubt of his lunacy and he was locked away at a holy spring for a month, cursing the day he decided to return from Paris.¹⁷⁵ Afāwārq chides the traditional aversion to wearing shoes, especially inside churches, in what

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 302 (emphasis added).

¹⁷¹ Autobiography: 295.

¹⁷² Aleme, ‘Foreign-educated Interpreters,’ p. 26.

¹⁷³ See pp. 43–4 above.

¹⁷⁴ IES Ms. 1682, Gäbru Memoirs: 31–2, 37.

¹⁷⁵ Heruy, *Addis Alām*: 3–5. See also, however, *BS*, 1.3.28, telling of an apocryphal fight between a boy dressed in Western dress and another wrapped up in the traditional *kuta*; needless to say, the latter, encumbered as he was by his flowing dress, was trounced. Tāklä-Hawaryat too recounts a story where his relatives advise him to wear Western dress if he wished to be respected and he also claims that his foreign attire earned him considerable respect in court: Autobiography: 224 ff. Sometimes, antipathy to Western attire finds support from strange quarters. On the eve of the departure of a government delegation to the United States in 1933, what concerned the American minister most was the obstinacy of Heruy in wearing European dress. ‘In his foreign clothing,’ Southard writes, ‘he is very little different from the usually accepted mental picture of an American darky preacher. This problem of possible color discrimination against the Ethiopians ... merits special advance consideration.’ US 033.8411 10 and 15/Special Mission, Southard to Sec. of St., 9.3.33, 17.11.33.

is probably a semi-autobiographical dialogue in his *Guide*. He mocks his countrymen for being loath to wear a product which was made after all from the hides of Ethiopian cattle. The dialogue assumes a dramatic twist when the foreign traveller asks his Ethiopian guide whether foreigners were also expected to leave their shoes outside when they enter the church. The guide's response has the usual Afāwārqian bite: 'Were that the case, my lord, Ethiopians would have been required to leave their feet, not merely their shoes, outside!'¹⁷⁶

The alienation of the educated could verge on ostracism when their divergence from the norm was given a religious (or more strictly denominational) interpretation. The common label tagged on to the educated was that they were Catholic or, even worse, Protestant (i.e. anti-Mary, *tsärä-Maryam*).¹⁷⁷ Täfäri was customarily accused of Catholic leanings by his opponents. Even the Catholic archbishop of Harar, André Jarosseau, resorts to the virulent *tsärä-Maryam* stigma when he wants to discredit Bāshahwerād in Täfäri's eyes. As he writes:

በሻህ ውረድ አመረክ ሳይሄድ ጥሩ ሰው ነበር ከአመረክ አገር የአመሴታችንና የጳዱስ
ፋርባን ጠላቶች ከተመለሰ ገን ከፋ ሁኖ ተገኘ። ነፍሱም መጥፎ ሁና ተገኘች። ጃንሆይ
የግርያምና የጳዱስ ፋርባን ጠላቶች በመንግሥትዎ የዐህላቸውን መርዝ ሲያስተምሩ
አያላገንዎትም?

Before he went to America, Bāshahwerād was a nice person. But after he returned from that land of the enemies of Our Lady and the Holy Communion, he has turned evil. His soul has also turned evil. Your Majesty! Are you not saddened when the enemies of Our Lady and the Holy Communion thus spread their poisonous teaching?¹⁷⁸

The all too common sensation provoked by the learned who tried to tell their countrymen that the earth revolves round the sun, rather than the other way round, was as much out of religious opprobrium as out of incredulity. As we have seen, Gäbrä-Egiabhēr Gila-Maryam was imprisoned in Harär for daring to advance that scientific truth. Afāwārq's guide, who claims he made a similar assertion, was more fortunate because people merely took pity on him for having lost his faculties from too much exposure to European education. Defeated, he vows that, from then on, he would concur with his compatriots even if they tell him that an insect is bigger than an elephant!¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Afāwārq, *Guide*: 149–52. The American minister writes of a rather curious unofficial ban on shoe-wearing in mid-1934. Provoked by the adverse effects of a certain brand which had been favoured by Palace attendants, the ban was also said to have been intended to check extravagance. The minister readily associates it with a growing anti-foreigner feeling: US 884.4051/1, Southard to Sec. of St., 2.6.34.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, *Māmero Tāmāramro*: 6–7.

¹⁷⁸ Capuchin Archives, 2R 200, Jarosseau to Täfäri, 30.9.24/7.6.32.

¹⁷⁹ Afāwārq, *Guide*: 152–4.

The war

Finally, we shall turn our attention to the role played by the intellectuals in the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–41. This has already been discussed and analysed in detail in an earlier article.¹⁸⁰ Here only a summary of that study will be given within the context of the social and political impact of the intellectuals.

In a way, some of the more perceptive intellectuals could be said to have seen the writing on the wall. The incompleteness of the Adwa victory, they argued, could only invite more aggression. This was on both territorial and political-economic levels. For *Blatta* Gäbrä-Egziabher Gila-Maryam, because Menilek failed to recover Eritrea, Adwa opened a chapter of shame rather than of glory.¹⁸¹ For Gäbrä-Heywät, political independence was hollow without economic development.¹⁸² As the decades rolled on, Ethiopia's inherently perilous position seemed to vindicate these dire prognoses. No one seemed to be more acutely aware of the impending danger than Tedla Hailé, who had been made Ethiopian consul in Asmara on the eve of the war, after his return from Belgium. From his post, he was able to observe Italian preparations and strongly urged his government to do likewise. His recommendations included close surveillance of the Eritrean–Ethiopian border and incitement of the Eritrean population against the Italians.¹⁸³

This was also when Täklä-Hawaryat revised his dormant military training. Three years before the outbreak of the war he submitted a comprehensive report to the council of ministers outlining the essential prerequisites for military victory. He recommended the reorganization of the military to meet the new contingency. The system of supplies was very inadequate in his eyes:

እውንሰ አሁን እነሱ እንደርቆሽ እንሸምብራ በሰልጽ ባህያ ዝርባ ወይም በሰው ትክሻ አመት
ወይም ይበልጥ ተገዛው ሰንት ሆነው በገልና በገምቦ ውሃ ተቀድቶ ያቡጀዲ ነጠላና ሱሪ
ተሰብሶ እነዚህ ሁሉ ጸሐይና ዝናብ ተፈራርቆባቸው በእንደዚህ ያለ አኳኋን ተዘምቶ በዛሬው
ዘመን ድል ለማግኘት ይቻላል?

Is a military victory at all conceivable in this day and age, if the army's provisions consist merely of *bāsso* (barley flour), *derqosh* (dried *enjāra*, the staple Ethiopian diet) and roasted peas transported by pack animals or humans for a year or more, with a soldier who gets his water from an earthen jug or a gourd and who wears *abujedid* cloth that is subjected alternately to the rain and the sun?¹⁸⁴

Täklä-Hawaryat's fellow cabinet minister, *Bitwäddäd* Getachäw Abatä,

¹⁸⁰ Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 271–95.

¹⁸¹ 'Ze Mätshaf': 1, 47, 56.

¹⁸² 'Até Menilek': 354.

¹⁸³ Del Boca, II: 232.

¹⁸⁴ MPA 369, 12.1.25/22.9.32.

was more ambivalent about the modernization of the army. Reflecting accurately enough the fundamental malaise of a society trapped in a dangerous moment of transition, he urged the abandonment of the tentative gestures towards modernization and the return to old norms before it was too late:

... ወደ አዲሱም ሥልጣኔ ሳንደርስ የተደገውንም ልግዳችንን ለቀን እንዲያው በመሐል
ነንና ወደ ሥልጣኔው ደረጃ ለመድረስ ገና እራቅ በመሆኑ አሁን የሚሻለን ተሎ ብለን ወደ
ተደገፍ ልግዳችን ተመልሰን ይህንኑ አርጌ የጦር ሕዝባችንን ደስ ግብኘት። ይኸውም ሹም
ሽር መስራት ጌጥና መሣሪያ መስጠት በየጊዜው ግብር ግብላት አይዘላም ግለት ተከራም
መፍቀድ ገር ገር ግድረገ ነው።

... we are caught between our old traditions and the new civilization. Since we still have a long way to go to attain that civilization, what is best for us is to hurry back to our former traditions and keep our old warriors happy by making *shumsher* (reshuffle), bestowing decorations and arms, giving banquets regularly, cheering them up, letting them chant their war-songs, and making a lot of noise.¹⁸⁵

Once war was imminent, the more traditional of the intellectuals set up what came to be known as *Yagär Feger Mahbär* (Ethiopian Patriotic Association). Prominent in it were Mäkonnen Habtä-Wald and Yoftahé Negusé. The latter in particular employed his considerable dramatic and poetic skills to rouse the public in defence of the motherland. His most celebrated play, *Afajäshen*, though completed later in exile in the Sudan, was started at this time. Its central theme was a warning not to surrender ailing Ethiopia to the seductive clutches of Fascist Italy.¹⁸⁶ Another founding member of the association, Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes, created a sensation with a highly rousing booklet entitled *YäWänd Lej Kurat* ('The Pride of a Son of the Fatherland'). Some 40,000 copies are said to have been distributed to soldiers marching to the front, effectively replacing their traditional prayer-books, the *Dawit* (the Psalms of David).¹⁸⁷ Ironically, the author later chose to collaborate with the Italians.

Not surprisingly, in view of his later record, Afäwärq was the one intellectual who was least perturbed about Italian aggressive intentions. On the contrary, he was prepared to vouch for the pacific intentions of Fascist Italy.¹⁸⁸ Surprisingly, the emperor chose him as his envoy to Italy just as relations were beginning to grow tense. He was followed, as we have seen, by Täklä-Hawaryat in Paris and Geneva and Wärqenäh in London. The appointments seem to have been dictated by a combination of logic and expediency. If Afäwärq's dubious loyalties could be set aside, one could

¹⁸⁵ MPA 369, n.d.

¹⁸⁶ BS, 3.10.35; Mulugéta: 45–6.

¹⁸⁷ Feqadä Adära, 'YäBlatta Wäldä-Giyorgis Wäldä-Yohannes YäHeywät Tarik-na YäDersät Serawochachäw', BA thesis (AAU, 1974EC): 12.

¹⁸⁸ BS, 16.5.29, 26.6.30, 4.2.32.

hardly think of any other three intellectuals better qualified to represent their country in their respective assignments. On the other hand, once Haylä-Sellásé had consolidated his power, he had less need for such independent-minded persons at the centre. From Rome Afäwärq continued sending reassuring messages of Italy's peaceful intentions.¹⁸⁹ The duplicity of international diplomacy at Geneva moved the otherwise combative Täklä-Hawaryat to tears.¹⁹⁰ Wärgenäh was more successful, thanks to his familiarity with the British ambience and the strong pro-Ethiopia solidarity movement set in motion by Sylvia Pankhurst.

As it turned out, only a few of the intellectuals investigated here were to survive the war and the ensuing Italian occupation. And, of those who did, many were marginalized; some died soon after. Reversing the order of nature, the sons generally died before the fathers. Members of what we have called the second generation of intellectuals were consumed in the first two years of the occupation, primarily through the Graziani massacre. Tedla Hailé was the first to die. He had crossed back to Ethiopia from his post in Asmara at the outbreak of hostilities and died on the northern front.¹⁹¹ Once the Italians crushed the Ethiopian army and entered the capital, the intellectuals, like all other Ethiopians, took one of three options: resistance, collaboration or exile.

The fiery Kidanä-Maryam Abärä started his resistance before the Italians had even entered Addis Ababa. As the capital was rocked by the riots that preceded the entry of the Italians on 5 May, he is said to have started organizing the youth and women of the city for a war of resistance. It is conceivable that he and his colleagues were also behind leaflets that were circulating in the capital in June–July 1936, instigating the population to an uprising against the Italians, possibly to coincide with an ill-coordinated patriot offensive from the countryside. It is not known precisely what happened to him after these bold but ineffectual moves. His name certainly does not figure in the ranks of perhaps the most coherent, if short-lived, intellectual opposition to Fascist occupation, the Black Lion movement.

This movement was established in 1936 by a group of young intellectuals and ex-cadets of the Holäta military school. It marked the highest level of organization attained by the prewar educated elite. Presided over by Dr Alämäwärq Bäyyana, a British-educated veterinary doctor, the movement enlisted (among others) the Eritrean-born Bälay Haylä-Ab and the sons of Heruy (Faqadä-Sellásé, alias George), Wärgenäh (Benyam and Yoséf) and Näsibu Zamanuél (Keflé). Those members who had not been

¹⁸⁹ Del Boca, II: 253–4, 310, 311.

¹⁹⁰ Germachäw Täklä-Hawaryat, in the Introduction to the Autobiography: 22. Only the lifting of the arms embargo on Ethiopia in late 1935 appears to have buoyed up his spirits somewhat and he expressed favourable prospects for Ethiopia in the war that had already started with Italy: AA/R77860, Bräuer (Brussels) to AA, 19.10.35.

¹⁹¹ There are conflicting versions about the circumstances of his death. Dr Amanuél said he fell ill; Tedla's wife, Wäyzäro Elizabeth Wärgenäh, claimed that he died fighting alongside Ras Seyum.

educated abroad were mostly products of the Täfäri Mäkonnen School.¹⁹²

The principles of the movement were enshrined in a ten-point constitution, a pioneering feature of which was the affirmation of the supremacy of the political over the military command. Members were also enjoined to treat prisoners-of-war humanely and to desist from molesting the peasantry. A dramatic show of strength, when they burnt down an Italian plane (along with some of its occupants) at Bonäya, not far from Nāqämté in Wälläga, cost them their haven in the domain of the local ruler, *Däjjazmach* Habtä-Maryam, who asked them to leave for fear of Italian reprisals. They had to retreat further to the west. They persuaded a rather disheartened and reluctant *Ras* Emeru, who had already experienced the ruthlessness of the Fascist onslaught on the northern front, to provide the authoritative leadership that they had hitherto lacked.

Encumbered by the large number of non-combatants who hung on to them to escape harassment from the Oromo population, the initially mobile force ponderously made its way to the Gojāb river (in Käfa), where Emeru and the Black Lions had no option but to surrender in late December 1936. Emeru was escorted to the safety of internment in Italy. Two months later, most of the members of the Black Lion organization perished in the Graziani massacre. In the end, it was the dogged resistance of the old warriors rather than the dramatic flourishes of the young combatants that spelt doom for the Fascist occupation. In a way, too, the short life of the Black Lions illustrates the marginality of the educated elite in Ethiopian social and political life at the time.

The spirit of the Black Lions was kept alive by *Blatta* Takkälä Wäldä-Hawaryat, who combined their fire with the perseverance of the old warriors. From the outset he had advocated resorting to guerrilla warfare, as he considered it sheer folly to engage in conventional combat with the well-armed and well-equipped Italians. He was against the emperor seeking exile, and so, once he took that option, he wrote him off from the future political life of the country. He even fleetingly considered republican government. His major preoccupation throughout the five-year period of Fascist rule became the forging of unity among the disparate and often mutually antagonistic patriotic forces.¹⁹³

Meanwhile, Afäwärq had emerged as the most articulate and unabashed ideologue of the Fascist order. A few months after he returned from Rome on the outbreak of war, he was assigned to negotiate with the Italians for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Although the terms proposed conceded a lot to the Italians, Mussolini was unimpressed and in any case uninterested after the decisive Battle of Maychäw on 31 March 1936.¹⁹⁴ Once the Italians

¹⁹² For more on the Black Lions, see Bahru, 'The Ethiopian Intelligentsia': 281–2.

¹⁹³ Anthony Mockler, *Haile Sellassie's War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign, 1935–1941* (1984), *passim*; Tasfaye Abbaba, 'The Life and Career of Dajjazmach Takkala Walda Hawaryat', BA thesis (HSIU, 1970); Mulusaw Meteku, *YäArbänñoch Tegel KäFashist Gar: KäShäwa eskä Sudan Täräf* (1937EC): 46; Heywät Hedaru, *Yachi Qän Tärasach. Kä Temhert Bét wädä Qonsela Sera* (1967 EC): 239–40.

¹⁹⁴ Del Boca, II: 499–500; Stella, 'Afewerk Ghevre Jesus': 598.

had established themselves in Addis Ababa, Afäwärq began to attack the exiled emperor and the patriots with venom. Abusing the latter as 'wild worms', he ridiculed their bid to resist the might of Fascist Italy in these terms:

የኢጣሊያ ሥራዊት ከዚህ ሲደርስ ጥቂቶች በጣም ጥቂቶች ብቻ ወደ ዱር ተሰማሩ።
... እንኳንስ እነሱ ምክር አንበሳ ዘለምነገደ ይሁዳ ሲያሰኝ የነበረው ንጉሥ አንበሳነቱ ቀርቶ ጥን
ቸል ሆኖ ፈርጦ መሄዱን ያውቃሉ። እነዚህ የዱር ትሎች መሸፈታቸው የደሀውን
የአግኛን በሬ እየሰነደሱ ለመብላት ብቻ ነው ሌላ ትርጉም የለውም።

When the Italian troops entered the capital, only a few, a tiny few, went into the bush ... They know very well that, let alone they, even the king who had prided himself as the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah has been reduced from a lion to a rabbit and has fled for his life. These wild worms have become *shefla* [bandits] merely to plunder the cattle of the poor, law-abiding peasantry; there is no other explanation for it.¹⁹⁵

Although such extreme identification with the Fascist cause did not save Afäwärq from the large-scale indiscriminate internments after the attempt on the life of Graziani in February 1937, he was later released and rose to become *Afä Qésar* (an imitation of the traditional Ethiopian title, *Afä Negus*), the highest post occupied by an Ethiopian in the Fascist hierarchy.

Many of the intellectuals sought exile. Of these, Heruy and Täklä-Hawaryat led a life of little consequence for the struggle at home. Heruy had accompanied the emperor to England and remained there until he died in 1938.¹⁹⁶ Täklä-Hawaryat was almost forgotten in remote Madagascar. A number of the young officers who were later to play an important role in the military and political life of the country managed to seek asylum in neighbouring countries like French Somaliland (Djibouti), British Somaliland and Kenya. Of the exiled intellectuals, it was Yoftahé, Wärgenäh and Mälaku Bäyyan who led an active life in the anti-Fascist struggle. Yoftahé made a dramatic escape from the Italians and made his way to the Sudan disguised as a priest. In exile he led a productive literary life, finishing his masterpiece, *Afajäsheñ*, and completing two other works, *Däbrä Tseyon* ('Mount Zion') and *Amätä Mehrät* ('Year of Mercy'). He also liaised between the emperor and the patriots. He conducted an active correspondence with the emperor as well as with his secretary, Wäldä-Giyorgis, and Mäkonnen Habtä-Wald in Paris. All three were admirers of Yoftahé's literary talent. Wäldä-Giyorgis in particular urged him to write a *magnum opus* that would immortalize his name, 'a book of greater value than the Bible, a book depicting in your usual graceful style what you have seen, heard and observed, and what Ethiopia has been made to endure'.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ *YäQésaru Mängest Mälektäñña*, 13.1.29/23.9.36, quoted in Zeqargachäw: 24. For a critique by Tamrat Ammanuél of Afäwärq's abuse of his literary talent, see 'Selä Ityopya Därasyan': 39–40.

¹⁹⁶ He is reported to have remarked regretfully that such a calamity had befallen Ethiopia because misgovernment had divided the population and gave an opening to the enemy: Lämna: 69, citing Acheber Gäbré-Hiôt.

¹⁹⁷ Mulugéta, appendix.

It is difficult to imagine a person better qualified than Wärgenäh at the time for the task of mobilizing British public support for the Ethiopian cause. And his assignment there could not have come at a better time either. He used his knowledge of the English to good advantage. In a series of articles in Sylvia Pankhurst's *New Times and Ethiopia News*, he castigated the League of Nations for abandoning Ethiopia and exposed the hypocritical neutrality of the British government. 'Ethiopia is not dead,' he proclaimed defiantly, 'she will not allow herself to be buried.'¹⁹⁸ But, ultimately, the old fighter had to bow out. The death of his sons, Benyam and Yoséf, during the Graziani massacre of February 1937 and the subsequent incarceration of the rest of his family was a big personal blow. Relations with the emperor also turned sour, mainly over finances.¹⁹⁹ The emperor was so estranged from his former minister that he told he British that he disclaimed any responsibility for his actions, as he did also for Tāklā-Hawaryat's, who is said to have been 'indulging in a great deal of anti-British talk' in Aden and Kenya,²⁰⁰ presumably before he settled in Madagascar.

Much more sustained was the agitation activity of Mälaku Bäyan. Sent by the emperor to coordinate the black solidarity movement, Mälaku arrived in New York City on 20 September 1936. He gave his first public address on 28 September, when he made a rousing declaration, very much in the spirit of Wärgenäh, that 'Ethiopia was not conquered and will never be conquered'. It was with that confidence in the indestructibility of Ethiopia and its institutions that he took issue with the *New York Times* one month later when it referred to Haylä-Sellasé as 'the former Emperor': 'I fail to understand why several times The New York Times has referred to His Majesty, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, as the "former Emperor". Who has informed you that he has abdicated or his position has been changed? His Majesty is the emperor of Ethiopia and he will always be.'²⁰¹

Mälaku's campaign skilfully combined appeals for solidarity with Ethiopia and assertions of black identity. His chief assignment was to take central control of the collection of funds on behalf of Ethiopia. The funds were to be disbursed primarily for the benefit of the Ethiopian refugees scattered all over the world. At the outset, Mälaku did this on an individual basis, designating himself as 'On Special Mission for His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I and the Ethiopian People in North and South America and the West Indies'. Later, he set up an organization called United Aid for Ethiopia and later, possibly in 1938, the Ethiopian World Federation, with a Dr Lorenzo H. King as president, Mälaku as vice-president, his wife

¹⁹⁸ *NTEN*, 23.5.36, 20.6.36, 17.10.36.

¹⁹⁹ Oral informant Emmanuel Abraham, who was then secretary of the Ethiopian Legation in London; corroborated by Dr Amanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé.

²⁰⁰ FO 371/22010, memo on conversation by Sir L. Oliphant, 14.2.38.

²⁰¹ Mälaku, ed.: 7; *New York Times*, 30.9.36. Mälaku's unbounded confidence in the liberation of Ethiopia was remarkable. He wrote: 'It is now plain to the world that Ethiopia shall not suffer very much longer. We will not only drive every Italian from our country, but will also drive them out of every other part of Africa in the near future.'

Dorothy as executive secretary and *Lej* Araya Abbäbä, a relative of the emperor, as treasurer.²⁰² Even before that organization was established he had set up his own paper, *The Voice of Ethiopia*, which he used to rally support as well as to polemicize his enemies.

Mälaku's mission proved rather contentious. As he himself explains, the collection of funds in the name of Ethiopia had created the opportunity for a great deal of racketeering and so his arrival on the scene was thus seen as an obstacle to a lucrative exercise.²⁰³ But Mälaku's most heated polemical battle was on ideological and political grounds rather than on financial ones. His target was none other than the famous black American leader, Marcus Garvey. Presumably, Garvey had written a piece that had questioned the rationale for black solidarity with Ethiopia when Ethiopians themselves were not prepared to consider themselves black or to show any concern for other black people. In the process, he had written what amounted to an apologia for Fascist occupation, particularly when he wrote: 'Probably it is through Italy in Abyssinia that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.'²⁰⁴ This provoked Mälaku to write a long response combining reasoned defence of his country's and emperor's record and a highly polemical exposé of the black leader's lack of integrity. Describing him as an instrument of 'Fascist and Catholic propaganda' and 'a victim of partisan bribe', Mälaku wrote: 'In these trying circumstances of racial history, when the sacred and natural heritage of your racial brothers is ravaged by a militant usurper ... anyone who would subvert the interest of the whole, whether by a cold indifference, plain self-interest, or injudicious aspirations, at once becomes guilty of the most consummate hypocrisy and treachery to the group.'²⁰⁵

It is not known how much money Mälaku was able to raise under these circumstances and in post-depression United States and how much, if any, was able to find its way to the refugees whose lot it was intended to alleviate. In any case, Mälaku died a year or so before his fervent and confident dream of the liberation of Ethiopia became a reality.

²⁰² Schomburg Center Papers, Mälaku to Casimir, 22.9.38. For Araya Abbäbä, who created an international stir because of his ultimately abortive engagement to a Japanese lady, see Bahru, 'The Concept of Japanization': 4. See also William R. Scott, 'Malaku E. Bayen: Ethiopian Emissary to Black America, 1936-1941,' *Ethiopia Observer* (1972): 133; FO 371/19176, Barton to Hoare, 21.11.35.

²⁰³ 'Ethiopian Envoy Makes Statement of Public Interest', *The Voice of Ethiopia*, 10.2.37.

²⁰⁴ *The Voice of Ethiopia*, 3.2.37. See also Schomburg Center Papers, undecipherable to Casimir, 17.11.37, citing another 'unjustifiable' reference of Garvey's to Haylä-Sellasé in which 'he has created the (wrong) impression that he is in the employ of Mussolini'.

²⁰⁵ *The Voice of Ethiopia*, January 1937, continued in *ibid.*, 3.2.37.

Conclusion



Ethiopia's encounter with Europe has passed through different stages. In the medieval period, European imagination was stirred by the story of Prester John, the legendary Christian king of fabulous riches and formidable power. That legend led to the first enduring relationship between Ethiopia and Christian Europe, notably Portugal. The Iberian connection was fraught with consequences, benign as well as malign. Portuguese military assistance saved the Christian kingdom from total destruction under the onslaught of Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim (Grañ) in the first half of the sixteenth century. Portuguese influence can also be traced in the spectacular edifices (mainly castles and bridges) that sprang up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the Ethio-Iberian military cooperation which was cemented in blood engendered the disastrous Jesuit bid to convert the country to Catholicism. It ended not only in the abdication of the Ethiopian sovereign, Susenyos, who had embraced Catholicism, but also in the expulsion of the Jesuits and the isolation of Ethiopia from Europe.

When Europe came back again in the nineteenth century, it was under different global circumstances and with greater vigour and determination. This time, the entire African continent, rather than a few coastal and inland territories, was the target. This time, too, Ethiopia could not afford to continue to shut off Europe. On the Ethiopian side, ambivalence gradually gave way to keen interest and the conclusion of treaties of friendship and free trade. European missionaries brought education as well as religion. Their consuls promoted commerce and exploration. Throughout much of Africa, evangelization and exploration almost inexorably led to colonization. Thanks to the victory she scored over Italian colonialism at the Battle of Adwa, however, Ethiopia became one of the very few exceptions.

Adwa set the modality for Ethiopia's modern relationship with Europe in particular and the West in general. Ethiopia joined the ranks of the

handful of African and Asian countries which remained politically independent but were under the shadow of the overwhelming European presence that had engulfed the two continents. Countries like Egypt, Iran (Persia), Thailand (Siam), Turkey and Japan fell into this category. These countries had to make adjustments to the new reality if they wished to survive as independent states. In other words, they had to modernize.

Inasmuch as the West had set the parameters of modernity, modernization was often indistinguishable from Westernization. By virtue of its remarkable success in this process of modernization or Westernization – to the extent in some cases of beating the West at its own game – Japan became a source of inspiration, a model of success, to these countries, including Ethiopia. If the ultimate goal was Westernization, the chosen path tended to be the Japanese way. Yet few, if any, of them could replicate the Japanese miracle, as it came to be called. That failure, even in the case of a country like Thailand, which had so much in common with Japan, only reinforced the truism that no two countries could follow the same path or attain the same level of modernization.

The burden of addressing the problems of Ethiopia's modernization in the early twentieth century fell on the shoulders of the educated elite. The members of that elite acquired the modern education that opened their eyes to their country's backwardness through various channels: missionary sponsorship, royal patronage, the state educational system, or sometimes completely fortuitous circumstances. Whatever the background and nature of their formation, whether they were educated abroad or at home, acquired formal qualifications or just had a spell of foreign exposure, these early intellectuals were not prepared merely to serve the state as diligent functionaries. Rather, acutely aware of their country's underdevelopment, they advocated a multifaceted programme of reform, including the expansion of education, the rationalization of central and regional administration, abolition of slavery and the slave trade, alleviation of the conditions of the peasantry, modernization of the judicial system and the military and the guaranteeing of freedom of conscience. The general thrust of this programme was the conviction that the political independence that the country had achieved by a remarkable feat of arms was meaningless unless it was accompanied by the modernization of society.

One can assess the role of these intellectuals in bringing about change at three levels: the articulation of their reformist ideas, the dissemination of those ideas and their practical implementation. One can perhaps state with a reasonable degree of confidence that the intellectuals were most successful in the first and had a diminishing rate of success in the second and third. The prewar intellectuals were among the most articulate group of intellectuals that Ethiopia has ever seen. Through what in effect became their organ, *Berhanena Sälam*, as well as the various books and booklets that they published, they were able to expose and analyse various issues of economic, social and political reform with eloquence and perseverance. The volume of their production was no less impressive than the power of their exposition. Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, clearly the most prolific of the lot,

had over 20 books to his credit. A few of them, notably Afāwārq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, rose to become masters of Amharic prose.

In a society which was predominantly non-literate, they suffered from the inherent disadvantage of a limited audience. Nor did *Berhanena Sälam* boast a high circulation. But their preference of the more popular Amharic to the classical Ge'ez clearly marked a departure from the past and thus lent their writings more than esoteric significance. A small but growing elite of urban Ethiopians, most significantly in the capital, Addis Ababa, read and reacted to the writings of these intellectuals. Moreover, the intellectuals at this stage were interested in reaching not so much the mass of the population as the ruling elite, whom they wanted to persuade to be patrons of change.

Whether and to what extent they succeeded in this last point brings us to the third index of measurement of their impact. While this is not as easy a task as the description of their careers or the discussion of their ideas, it is none the less evident that a fair number of their ideas and recommendations were endorsed and implemented by *Ras Täfäri Mäkonnen* (later Emperor Haylä-Sellasé), who found the intellectuals a useful ally in his struggle against the forces of tradition represented by Empress Zäwditu and the other conservative stalwarts of the establishment. Indeed, a number of the fiscal reforms of the period could be traced to the writings of Gäbrä-Heywät Baykädañ. Two of the intellectuals, Gäbrä-Heywät and Afāwārq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, were chosen for the strategic post of *näggadras* of the eastern town of Dire Dawa. At least three of them – Heruy Wäldä-Sellasé, Sahlé Tsädalu and Täklä-Hawaryat Täklä-Maryam – rose to the position of ministers at a time when ministerial portfolios were generally the preserve of members of the traditional nobility. The last-mentioned drafted Ethiopia's first constitution, which was promulgated in 1931.

In some ways, the promulgation of the constitution marks the end of the usefulness of the independent intellectuals to Haylä-Sellasé. Although Täklä-Hawaryat was subsequently appointed minister of finance, his tenure did not last a year. He was soon transferred to an ambassadorial post in Paris and Geneva. He was joined in succession by Afāwārq in Rome and Wärgenäh in London. The 'banishment' of such relatively independent-minded and outspoken intellectuals underscored a remarkable aspect of the partnership between Haylä-Sellasé and the intellectuals. This was the fact that the emperor felt most comfortable with those intellectuals who not only were successful in blending the traditional and the modern, with the emphasis heavily on the former, but also showed unflinching obedience to his authority. Heruy and Sahlé were two good examples of this pattern.

The Fascist invasion of 1935 put a rude and abrupt end to this fascinating experiment in social and political reform. The intellectuals were either liquidated or had to seek exile. The former was the fate of many members of the younger generation. After a brief spell of opposition under the banner of the Black Lion organization, and partly because of that opposition, they were rounded up in the wake of the Graziani incident of February 1937 and ruthlessly executed. Exile was the lot of many members

of the older generation, including Heruy, Täklä-Hawaryat and Wärgenäh, but with the exception of Afäwärq, who became an unabashed ideologue of the Fascist order. The extermination of the young intellectuals is considered to have created a generation gap in the intellectual and political history of the country. It must have contributed to the drab intellectual climate that marked the postwar period, a situation that contrasted with the excitement and vibrancy of the time before the war.

The educated elite after 1941 saw its mission as one of loyal and dedicated service rather than engagement in social and political critique. While it was to be distinguished for technical competence and professional expertise, there was little of the daring and exuberance displayed by the prewar generation. It was more in the realm of culture, notably in literature and art, than in that of independent political thought, that the immediate postwar generation of intellectuals made its impact. The literary renaissance pioneered by writers like Käbbädä Mikaél, Mäkonnen Endalkachäw and Germachäw Täklä-Hawaryat (son of *Bajerond* Täklä-Hawaryat) blossomed in the 1960s, perhaps one of the most fascinating decades in the cultural history of Ethiopia, a time reminiscent of the exuberance and vibrancy of the 1920s. Those who have now become the giants of Amharic literature flourished in that decade or in the years just before and after. The art world also produced two painters with varying styles and impact: the classical Afäwärq Täcklé and the pioneer of abstract art, Gäbrä-Krestos Dästa.

The 1960s also saw the rise of organized and independent political thought and practice. It began with the 1960 abortive coup, led by the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, Brigadier General Mängestu Neway. The intellectual inspiration and leadership of that coup came, however, from his American-educated brother, Gärmamé Neway. The coup was the outcome of the frustration of sections of the educated and military elite at the absence of meaningful political and economic reform. It was a signal, which the regime failed to heed, that it would face even more uncompromising opposition if it did not mend its ways. As the regime opted for the policy of continued suppression of dissent, the opposition also assumed an ever more strident character. The articulation of political opposition also passed from disgruntled civil servants to radical students.

The year 1965, when students came out onto the streets with the revolutionary slogan of 'Land to the tiller', marked the birth of the Ethiopian student movement. Thereafter, the political agenda became the revolutionary transformation of society. Marxist-Leninist ideology became the preferred recipe for social and political change. The genesis and course of that intellectual discourse will I hope be the subject of another book, a sequel to this one. Yet what a long way things appear to have come from the time in the early twentieth century, when intellectuals relied on gentle persuasion rather than violent confrontation, when they sought royal patronage rather than the overthrow of the monarchy, when they advocated gradual reform rather than the revolutionary transformation of society.

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C. Oral informants

Interviews were conducted with the following persons, directly or indirectly related to the story of the book, in the years 1989 and 1990, all in Addis Ababa.

Dr Ammanuél Gäbrä-Sellasé, educated in Scotland before 1935 and survived the war to lead a long and active life, particularly in the evangelical field. He rose to become president of the Mäkanä Iyyäsus Evangelical Church.

Ato Avedis Terzian, a highly knowledgeable informant of Armenian origin.

Wäyzäro Elizabeth Wärqenäh, daughter of *Hakim* Wärqenäh.

Ato Emmanuel Abraham, one of the first students of Täfäri Mäkonnen School, closely associated with *Hakim* Wärqenäh in the 1930s and during the war, held various ministerial and ambassadorial posts after 1941.

Wäyzäro Feqer Badema, daughter of the famous Protestant cleric, *Qës* Badema.

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Wäyzäro Sara Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, wife of Bāshahweräd Habtä-Wäld.

Ato Sebhātu Gäbrä-Iyyäsus, brother-in-law of Bāshahweräd Habtä-Wäld.

Ato Schul Mikaél, son of Dr Mikaél Täsämma.

Wäyzäro Sosena Wärqenäh, daughter of *Hakim* Wärqenäh.

Ato Surafél Haylé, a relative of Asbé Haylu.

Ato Täklä-Tsadeq Mäkurya, the noted Ethiopian historian, educated at the Alliance Française before the war.

Wäyzäro Tserha Asbé, daughter of Asbé Haylu.

Wäyzäro Wäyneshät Bāshahweräd, daughter of Bāshahweräd Habtä-Wäld.

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The author, Bahru Zewde, taken in 1922 against the background of Muskingum College (Ohio), alma mater of two characters of the story, Mälaku Bäyyan and Bāshahweräd Habtä-Wäld.